

Uniting Warmth and Light:  
Samuel Taylor Coleridge as Defender of Evangelical Anglican Christianity

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*For Portia*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

All references to Coleridge except for his letters and notebooks, unless otherwise noted, come from *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Abbreviations I use are as follows:

- AR            *Aids to Reflection*. Edited by John Beer. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 1993.
- BL            *Biographia Literaria*. Edited by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. 2 vols. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 1983.
- CM            *Marginalia*. Edited by George Whalley and H. J. Jackson. 6 vols. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 1980-2001.]
- LS            *Lay Sermons*. Edited by R. J. White. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 1972.
- OM            *Opus Maximum*. Edited by Thomas McFarland. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 2002.
- PL            *Lectures 1818-1819: On the History of Philosophy*. Edited by J.R. de J. Jackson 2 vols. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 2000.
- SW&F        *Shorter Works and Fragments*. Edited by H.J. Jackson and J.R. de J. Jackson 2 vols. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 1995.
- TT            *Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by Carl R. Woodring. 2 vols. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 1990.

### Other Critical Editions of Coleridge's Work

- CL            *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by Ernest Leslie Griggs. 6 vols. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1956-71.
- CN            *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by Kathleen Coburn. 5 vols in 10. London & Princeton: Routledge and Princeton University Press, 1957-2002.

NOTE: I have preserved Coleridge's corrections, substitutions, and strikethroughs from his original manuscripts as they are recorded in these critical editions. Unless otherwise noted, italics in all quotations are also original.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In Anglo-American scholarship, Samuel Taylor Coleridge has undoubtedly received his greatest share of attention from literary scholars – as with English Romanticism in general, since it has been seen primarily as a literary-aesthetic movement. In turn, Coleridge scholars will often speak as though he were two figures. There is the young Coleridge, the poetic genius whose meaningful career ended with the contributions to literary and aesthetic theory made by the *Biographia Literaria* in the mid-1810s. Then there is the older Coleridge who squandered his creative abilities on a metaphysical dilettantism that led to unoriginal and obscure musings combined with a final, unfortunate descent into orthodox Christianity and political conservatism. At best, this later Coleridge contributed to intellectual history by introducing the English-speaking world to German Idealist thought. At worst, this period of Coleridge's life serves only to provide fodder for biographers to paint a tragic picture of the creative genius's fall from greatness into the mire of opium addiction, strained relationships, and a creative constipation caused by adherence to repressive ideologies.

Lucy Newlyn provides an illuminating example of this historically dominant approach to Coleridge's thought. Writing about the changes that have occurred in literary studies since the 1980s, Newlyn points out that one would no longer conceive of organizing an introductory course on English Romanticism without appreciating the movement's authors "historically and comparatively, not just according to the standards of taste which have made them classics for

two centuries.”<sup>1</sup> This shift means considering Coleridge’s poetry with an eye not only to his role as a poet, but “also as a journalist, preacher and lecturer.”<sup>2</sup> Such a sentiment illuminates the assumed position of Coleridge studies in the academy in at least two important ways. First, until the 1980s, Coleridge’s poetry was the primary or even exclusive scholarly focus. Second, even though students of Coleridge have begun recognizing the importance of his own extra-literary interests, they assume that literature departments, interested mainly in his poetry and, potentially, theory of criticism, will remain the primary location for a study of Coleridge.

This more expansive and interdisciplinary approach to Coleridge still betrays a belief that he was a poet who happened to have political, philosophical, and religious ideas. However, such an approach does not justly represent the self-conceptions and, arguably, real value of Blake’s, Wordsworth’s, and, above all, Coleridge’s intellectual and artistic programs. On this point, one can appreciate the more holistic approach taken by scholars of German Romanticism, who see it as a larger social, scientific, philosophical, and theological movement. Correspondingly intellectual historians, theologians, and philosophers customarily join literary scholars in the study of German Romanticism.<sup>3</sup> Scholars of German Romanticism understand the artistic creation of these thinkers as illustrative of and expressing the larger intellectual whole of which it forms one part. If this approach holds true for the German Romantics, for whom true art was

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Newlyn, introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, ed. Lucy Newlyn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Newlyn, “Introduction,” 1.

<sup>3</sup> One need look no further than *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, which surveys both German Idealism and Romanticism, and includes figures like Hölderlin, Novalis, and Schleiermacher as well as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Manfred Frank’s *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989); *Selbstgefühl* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003); »Unendliche Annäherung« *Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997); and Dieter Henrich’s *Der Gang des Andenkens: Beobachtungen und Gedanken zu Hölderlins Gedicht* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986).

meant to raise a person above mediate mental representation to a kind of non-cognitive and ultimate immediacy, then the same approach should prove that much more important for studying Coleridge, for whom German Romantic figures often lacked an appropriate rationalism.

While the neglect of Coleridge's larger intellectual vision arises in part from the state of Anglo-American approaches to Romanticism, the nature of Coleridge's work itself has posed its own problems for those who would go beyond his poetry. Coleridge's prose corpus is truly expansive, but much of it remained in draft form or became publicly available only after significant editorial redaction. Many of his published works feel unfinished or underdeveloped, with Coleridge frequently promising to develop an idea in a work that never saw publication or even composition.<sup>4</sup> Only with the recent compilation and publication of the massive critical editions of his work (*Collected Works of Coleridge*, his collected letters, and his personal notebooks) can the reader see greater cohesion to his overall system of thought and how Coleridge further expounded upon many of those otherwise elusive concepts.

Furthermore, Coleridge's thought is both expansive and organic, leading many to the feel overwhelmed and to believe that no one person possesses the expertise to unpack any one of Coleridge's texts. Coleridge absorbed an astounding amount of printed material, having read at any given point in his life nearly everything in print in Britain up to that time. His lifelong quest for a synthetic and unitive intellectual system pushes against the compartmentalized division of scholarly labor that has developed in the modern university. Full appreciation of any individual piece of Coleridge's work requires some knowledge not only of the 18<sup>th</sup> century British philosophical and scientific intellectual tradition, but also of Idealism both in its ancient and

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<sup>4</sup> Most famously his discussion of the imagination in chapters 12 and 13 of the *Biographia Literaria* (BL 232-306).



modern forms, the tradition of Christian mysticism, and early 19<sup>th</sup> century developments in chemistry and the life sciences.<sup>5</sup>

Coleridge's philosophical and theological commitments have also put him at odds with the dominant styles of philosophy and theology in the English-speaking world. Philosophically, Coleridge's strong commitment to a distinctive form of Idealist metaphysics put his thought at odds with the Utilitarian, scientific materialist, and analytic traditions that came to dominate philosophical thinking in Great Britain and the United States in much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. That Coleridge saw a vital unity between theology and philosophy, as well as a tendency to under-develop his arguments and over-sell his conclusions have led to some philosophers even today asking not only whether Coleridge is philosophically relevant, but whether it is even appropriate to call him a philosopher at all.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The ready availability of Coleridge's unpublished works, as well as scholarly editions of his published works, that helped lessen the first internal impediment only exacerbate the problem of expansiveness and the accompanying charge of an untidy eclecticism. However, even during his own lifetime, this expansive approach to human knowledge often marked Coleridge not as a uniting visionary, but as an eclectic compiler, bogged down by a variety of sources at once too broad and too deep for him ever to say anything original. That Coleridge sometimes (most notoriously and extensively in the *Biographia*) failed to adequately recognize his sources for specific quotations has only helped to confirm the inferiority of his work: not only was he unoriginal, but he was intellectually dishonest in his unoriginality. A good discussion of the complex issues surrounding Coleridge's plagiarisms can be found in the Editor's Introduction to the Engell and Bate edition of the *Biographia Literaria*. They explain that while Coleridge certainly could have done more to properly attribute the extensive quotations he employs, it is likewise unfair to characterize him as having intentionally and maliciously passed off the *thought* of these thinkers as his own. Since Coleridge often uses the quotations more as creative ideational building blocks for his own philosophical vision and did not attempt to pass off Kant or Schelling's (for instance) general thought as his own, the editors think that at least *some* of the guilt for the plagiarisms should be lifted from Coleridge's shoulders (BL lvii-lviii).

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Hamilton's essay "Coleridge the Philosopher" in the *Cambridge Companion*. Hamilton concluded that Coleridge was not *really* doing philosophy (or at least anything that can be considered worthwhile philosophy) less because of the "untidiness" of Coleridge's thinking than because Coleridge in the end grounds his philosophy in a triune, personal view of God. That doing so revokes Coleridge's philosophical credentials seems strange considering it very well could also do this for Hegel. More importantly, though, Hamilton mistakenly conflates the fact that Coleridge did come to accept the Trinity as an essential part of the Christian faith with the idea that he set out to develop a system of thought in which the Triune God was a foregone conclusion. Ironically, what comes through in this essay is actually a strong tone that seems quite contrary to the spirit of philosophical inquiry, namely that a system of thought that includes Christian articles of faith cannot be anything but backdoor theology, regardless of how the thinker arrived at those conclusions.

If his unitive (or at least conciliatory) vision of the relationship between theology and philosophy made him too theological and unphilosophical for philosophers, it made him too philosophical and untheological to many theologians. Douglas Hedley has drawn attention to how Coleridge cuts against the grain of the dominant theological moods in both Protestant and Catholic thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. On the Protestant side, attempts to see Coleridge as a theologian meet “the continuing influence of the anti-Hellenism of the Ritschl-Harnack tradition of the nineteenth century and the intransigent hostility to philosophical theology of the most influential twentieth-century theologian, Karl Barth.”<sup>7</sup> For Catholics, there is the impediment erected by “official Roman Catholic Neo-Thomist opposition to Platonism and idealism as sources of various dangerous heresies: ‘pantheism,’ ‘ontologism,’ ‘emanationism,’ etc.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite these historical challenges, a movement dedicated to Coleridge’s whole system of thought has gained momentum, especially since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. 1930 saw the publication of John Muirhead’s *Coleridge as Philosopher*<sup>9</sup> and 1971 brought Owen Barfield’s *What Coleridge Thought*.<sup>10</sup> Importantly, Thomas McFarland’s *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* contextualized and mitigated the charges of plagiarism, thus removing one of the main hurdles to approaching Coleridge as an innovative and significant thinker.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Hedley, *Philosophy and Religion*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> John Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1930).

<sup>10</sup> Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971).

<sup>11</sup> Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1969).

James Boulger's *Coleridge as Religious Thinker* in 1961 provided one of the first attempts at a thorough explication of Coleridge's theology.<sup>12</sup> While it does not always come down on the side of Coleridge's originality or importance for the Christian tradition, it does represent an attempt to show that a thorough theological orientation can be seen throughout Coleridge's work. J. Robert Barth's *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine* continued in the vein of providing an overview of Coleridge's theological thinking, albeit with a greater sense that Coleridge could prove fruitful for current theology, particularly with regards to dialogue between Catholics and Protestants.<sup>13</sup> In the last 20 years, though, the theological world has begun to seriously consider Coleridge as a relevant figure for *contemporary* thought. John Milbank has attempted to enlist Coleridge for the cause of Radical Orthodoxy (RO), and RO is arguably one of the most important theological developments of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>14</sup> Seemingly in response, one sees in Douglas Hedley's detailed and carefully researched presentation of Coleridge a desire to marshal him *against* traditions such as Barthianism, Post-liberalism, and Radical Orthodoxy, which Hedley sees as fideistic, nonfoundationalist overreactions against an Enlightenment overreliance on reason. When Coleridge gets caught in a tug of war about whether he belongs to one of the most significant contemporary theological movements, I think it safe to assume he should receive consideration as offering potentially significant insights for constructive Christian thought.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> James D. Boulger, *Coleridge as Religious Thinker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> J. Robert Barth, S.J., *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

<sup>14</sup> John Milbank, "The Divine *Logos* and Human Communication," in *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 3-24.

<sup>15</sup> Among those who focus on Coleridge's poetic compositions, there has likewise been an increasing awareness of the theo-philosophical nature of his poetry. Works such as J. A. Appleyard's *Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature* and John Beer's *Coleridge's Poetic Intelligence* both seek to show the close link between Coleridge's poetic work and his other intellectual pursuits. Stephen Prickett, whose scholarship combines theological and literary analysis

In a connection to Coleridge that will form the basis of my argument in this study, I turn now to another historically marginal movement in the academy that has also received increased attention in recent years as important and influential: 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical revival movements. In its British-American context, this revival manifested itself as the First Great Awakening in America and the Methodist and larger evangelical movements in Great Britain. While histories of these movements, and theological expositions of their leading figures, have been continually produced since the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, this scholarship has tended to originate from and remain within these movement's specific confessional traditions. This observation does not mean that quality literature did not emerge from denominational historians; on the contrary, much excellent scholarship came from American and, in particular, British Methodist scholars, especially in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, one unfortunate consequence has been the development to some degree of a kind of intellectual parochialism, often focusing on Methodism as an isolated phenomenon and hesitating to engage with scholars from outside of this circle.<sup>17</sup>

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and who has made important contributions to the study of Pan-European Romanticism, has done substantial work to demonstrate the religious dimension expressed through Coleridge's poetry, the diachronic unity of his thought, and the influence Coleridge, considered as a theologian, exerted on subsequent English theological traditions. Furthermore, Prickett has help put the sequestering of Coleridge to the exclusive domain of literary significance into historical context. In his *Romanticism and Religion*, Prickett shows that while Coleridge's thought did represent "the possibility of a unity between philosophy, theology, and aesthetics" for a "tiny minority within the Church of England," the larger Victorian intellectual establishment did not consider these thinkers of great influence and never considered them to have coalesced into a distinct Coleridgean "school."

<sup>16</sup> There are far too many sources to be named. Among them are Maldwyn Edwards's *After Wesley: A Study of the social and political influence of Methodism in the middle period (1791-1849)* (London: The Epworth Press, 1935); John S. Simons' *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London: The Epworth Press, 1921) and *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (London: The Epworth Press, 1923); Leslie F. Church's *The Early Methodist People* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948) and *More about the Early Methodist People* (London: The Epworth Press, 1949); and J. Ernest Rattenbury's *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns* (London: The Epworth Press, 1941).

<sup>17</sup> For example, in an email correspondence, Richard Brantley indicated that while he has had luck finding scholars in literature departments, general Romanticism studies, and religion and literature programs who engage with his work, he has not found those who do specifically Wesleyan studies particularly receptive to his work (Richard Brantley, January 24, 2013, email message to author).

Furthermore, when Methodism and Evangelicalism received attention from scholars beyond these denomination boundaries, they were treated in a way that only led to further stigmatization. Both Whig and Marxist historical traditions have tended toward dismissive or negative portrayals of these movements. Those committed to a historical narrative with the European Enlightenment and the triumph of rationalism and secularism as a telos tend to collapse pietistic and evangelical movements into a larger category of regressive, irrational dogmatism, or, at the very least, as propagating a culture of anti-intellectualism.<sup>18</sup> Marxist and other sorts of materialist historians have likewise tended to see Methodism and Evangelicalism as oppressive ideologies that served the purpose of developing a passive and productive proletariat, with E.P. Thompson as the progenitor and most famous defender of this position.<sup>19</sup>

In theology, the intellectual architects of Methodism and evangelicalism are regularly dismissed as intellectual light-weights because they avoided speculative or systematic thinking. One hears, even from scholars belonging to the Wesleyan tradition, that John Wesley was not “a theologian’s theologian,” and that he produced relatively unoriginal theological thought that is better described as “folk theology.”<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Edwards, who is regularly classed as one of early America’s best thinkers, stands apart as one of the few exceptions. Even this praise comes across as a kind of back-handed complement, akin to a critic referring to a musician as playing “some of the finest Jazz – for a French Horn player.”

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<sup>18</sup> The introductions to both Frank O’Gorman’s *The Long Eighteenth Century* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1997) and Jeremy Black’s *Eighteenth Century Britain, 1688-1783*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) provide good overviews of the history of 18<sup>th</sup> century historiography.

<sup>19</sup> David Hempton’s article “Wesley in Context” from *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, eds. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 60-80, introduces the specific historiographic debates surrounding Methodism.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Albert C. Outler, “Preface,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), iii.

One can postulate numerous reasons whence comes this dismissal. The theology guild frequently sets before itself 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century German thought as the ideal for intellectually rigorous and original thinking, and often has as its foil the intellectual shallowness and lack of originality of Anglo-American and 18<sup>th</sup> century thought. Most early evangelical and Methodist thinkers fall into both of these latter categories. This attitude is not helped by the reality that a Wesley or an Edwards often lacks the originality and gravity of a Hegel, a Troeltsch, a Barth, or a Rahner, although the chasm may be narrower than many theologians care to admit.

The winds of intellectual change seem upon us, though. David Hempton has pointed out that “although evangelicalism was one a despised and little studied tradition, there is now no shortage of good scholarship on how, why, and where it expanded since the early 1700s” and “equally no shortage of biographies of leading evangelicals.”<sup>21</sup> I believe at least three trends lie behind this shift. First, an increasing interest in social history has allowed for a conversation about the importance of the lived experience of historically marginalized groups. Second, a confluence of historiographic trends has challenged Whig and Marxist conceptions of proper historical reconstruction. These newer trends either tend to see religion as a more powerful force in 18<sup>th</sup> century thought than heretofore recognized or promote a conception of “modernity” that expands beyond the narrow confines of “Enlightenment,” giving pietistic/evangelical movements a claim to being modern when before they were seen as reactionary responses to modernity. Finally, and close to this second trend, thinkers like W.R. Ward have proposed that whatever may have happened to later forms of Evangelicalism, its originators made significant contributions to the course of intellectually history.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> David Hempton, *Evangelical Disenchantment: 9 Portraits of Faith and Doubt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

At the intersection of these two historiographical and intellectual traditions sits research on the relationship between English Romanticism and British Methodism/Evangelicalism. Attempts to map this relationship are not necessarily new; Frederick Gill's *The Romantic Movement and Methodism* was one of the first attempts and it was published in 1937.<sup>23</sup> However, until recently, only a few scholars have written extensively on this relationship, with Richard Brantley being the most prominent example.<sup>24</sup> It is only in the last decade or so that scholars part of something approaching an intellectual trend have seriously begun examining the causal matrix between English Romanticism and the Evangelical Revival. Serious consideration of the relationship between these two movements, even though they are temporally proximate and socially significant, has likely only gained momentum in the last few years because of the causes listed above, amplified when they intersect with each other. Since most who study English Romanticism come from literature departments, academic balkanization has probably prevented these scholars from engaging significantly with serious religious history. This is compounded by the academic isolation historically characteristic of those studying evangelicalism.

Beams of interdisciplinary light have nevertheless begun to shine through cracks in the various departmental silos. Several monographs have been published describing the ways in

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Frederick C. Gill, *The Romantic Movement and Methodism: A Study of English Romanticism and the Evangelical Revival* (London: The Epworth Press, 1937).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Richard Brantley's *Wordsworth's "Natural Methodism"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975); *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville, FL: The University of Florida Press, 1984); and *Coordinates of Anglo-American Romanticism: Wesley, Edwards, Carlyle & Emerson* (Gainesville, FL: The University Press of Florida, 1993). Many of the authors in the last 40 or 50 years who *have* shown interest in the theological and religious dimensions of English Romanticism have acknowledged Methodism/Evangelicalism as anticipating or influencing certain aspects of Romantic thought. Stephen Prickett provides one of the best examples of this phenomena, with his essay on "the religious context" of English Romanticism in *The Romantics*, ed. Stephen Prickett (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1981), 115-63, and *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), especially 106-8.

which principle figures in the British Romantic movement came from families with strong ties to evangelicalism and how this background provided some of the important forms and emphases for their work. Adding to Brantley's 1975 *Wordsworth's "Natural Methodism,"* in which he sees Wordsworth's magnum opus *The Prelude* as using the form of Methodist conversion narrative to describe his own conversion to a kind of pantheistic spirituality of nature, are at least two works on how William Blake's religious thought can be situated among the more ecstatic and mystical developments in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodism.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, books such as John Mee's *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation*,<sup>26</sup> Robert M. Ryan's *The Romantic Reformation*,<sup>27</sup> Daniel E. White's *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*,<sup>28</sup> Orienne Smith's *Romantic Women Writers, Revolution, and Prophecy*,<sup>29</sup> Jasper Cragwall's *Lake Methodism*,<sup>30</sup> and Helen Boyles's *Romanticism and Methodism*<sup>31</sup> have all endeavored to show the interchange between evangelicalism/Methodism (and other forms of late 18<sup>th</sup> century affective/emotive religion) and the development of English Romanticism.

The one significant exception to this trend has so far been Samuel Taylor Coleridge. There have been several volumes dedicated to expounding Coleridge's religious views,

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<sup>25</sup> E.g., Michael Farrell, *Blake and the Methodists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Jennifer G. Jesse, *William Blake's Religious Vision* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> John Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Robert M. Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature 1789-1794* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Orienne Smith, *Romantic Women Writers, Revolution, and Prophecy: Rebellious Daughters, 1786-1826* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Jasper Cragwall, *Lake Methodism: Polite Literature and Popular Religion in England, 1780-1830* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Helen Boyles, *Romanticism and Methodism* (London: Routledge, 2017).



particularly his more mature, orthodox positions. Likewise, many of the authors here described, notably Gill, Brantley, Prickett, and Mee, believe that Coleridge's thought shows signs of Methodist/Evangelical influence. But unlike Wordsworth and Blake, no single monograph dedicated to the relationship between Methodism/Evangelicalism and the development of Coleridge's thought has emerged. While I hope to argue to the contrary, this is likely because few have seen this omission as an actual lacuna, in the sense that Coleridge does not seem to have been exposed to Methodism/Evangelicalism like Wordsworth and Blake were. Blake was raised in a Methodist household and Wordsworth's family were among the early Anglican Evangelicals (and ones who seemed to have some affinity for Wesleyan Methodism, if the names of William's brothers John and Charles are any indication). Coleridge, like Wordsworth and unlike Blake, did convert from the family religion to a mixture of rationalist Christianity and political radicalism. Unlike Wordsworth, he was raised in what has generally been considered a party-line, non-Evangelical Church of England home. Many of Coleridge's interpreters would probably agree with Robert Barth's assessment that Coleridge's father John need not be seen as more than "a sound if unimaginative Church of England Clergyman."<sup>32</sup> On the standard interpretation, Coleridge's religious biography takes on a parabolic shape: raised in Anglican orthodoxy, he traveled through radical Unitarianism only to return to orthodoxy, this time undergirded by a healthy dose of Idealist philosophy. Lacking the early, direct formative exposure to evangelicalism that Blake and Wordsworth received and having only interacted with these traditions as an outside observer, one would naturally expect Coleridge to exhibit a much lower and more indirect indebtedness to these traditions.

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<sup>32</sup> Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, 1.

However, I will argue that Coleridge, far from being the English Romantic at the greatest remove from Methodist/evangelical ideas, developed a theology and religious philosophy that distinctly echoes, and owed a great debt to, evangelicalism. In making this claim, I will argue for what at this point probably seems even more contentious: among the main currents of religious thought in Britain at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Coleridge's mature religious thought has the greatest affinity with a group of Evangelicals in the Church of England. I will even go so far as to say that Coleridge, in returning to orthodox Anglicanism, returned to a distinctively *evangelical* form of orthodox Anglicanism and that by the time he died, Samuel Coleridge had become some form of moderate Anglican Evangelical.

This position does not mean that Coleridge did not modify or mitigate some evangelical emphases. Neither does it mean that one should cease to see in Coleridge's thought an affinity for a metaphysical speculation uncharacteristic of British Evangelical thought at that time.<sup>33</sup> Finally, this assertion does not prohibit one from seeing Coleridge as a synthetic thinker seeking a grand theo-philosophical system between the ecstatic "warmth" of Methodist emotionalism and the cold "light" of the rationalism of late 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment religion. However, I think it wrong to interpret Coleridge as seeking a solution to this dialectic that sat equidistant, as it were, between the two. Instead, I will argue that the relationship between these two poles was weighted significantly in favor of evangelicalism in Coleridge's work and that he ultimately sought to infuse a greater degree of rationalist inquiry and intellectual depth into an essentially Evangelical theological framework. He may have provided a metaphysical superstructure to reinforce and

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<sup>33</sup> It would, however, be unfair to single out evangelicalism as particularly anti-metaphysical; It would be more accurate to say that all the main currents of British thought going into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century shared this attitude. Coleridge's affinity for speculative metaphysics, particularly for various forms of Platonism and German Idealism, distinguished him from the mainstream of any strand of British religious thought in his time and would not in itself have put him at a comparatively greater remove from the evangelicals.

underpin his theological convictions that went far beyond that provided by most of his contemporary evangelicals, but the core constellation of religious convictions for which Coleridge sought such support – and the way these convictions were emphasized – were distinctively Evangelical.

In making my argument, I will primarily limit myself to Coleridge's work composed after his conversion back to Trinitarian Christianity in 1805 until his death in 1834. During this period, while one sees a definite transformation and deepening of his philosophical thought, Coleridge remains remarkably consistent in his core Christian beliefs and how he chose to emphasize certain of them. Coleridge came to recognize a distinction between those beliefs common to all religious traditions such as belief in a God, the creation of the world by this God, etc., and those specific to Christianity. What is distinctive about Christianity is the belief that humans need a savior, that we have been given one, and that this savior is revealed in the Christian Scriptures to be God incarnate in Jesus Christ. In particular, Coleridge emphasized the doctrine of original sin (albeit modulated through his own thinking), the priority of God's grace in the order of salvation, a spiritual birth as the subjective consequence of God's grace and as the purpose of Christ's redemptive work, and the subsequent growth in holiness resulting from this spiritual rebirth as the human will becomes more conformed to and united with the Divine will.

This specific constellation of beliefs, which among them were emphasized, how they are understood, and the rhetoric used to present them make Coleridge's religious thought look remarkably similar to the distinguishing constellation of beliefs, practices, and language of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century British evangelicals, especially that of the moderate Calvinism particular to Anglican Evangelicals. This set of affinities, if examined alongside a biographical sketch of Coleridge's religious development, leads to the conclusion that one may plausibly see Coleridge

as having undergone a protracted conversion to evangelical Christianity beginning in the mid-1790s. In “uniting warmth and light” he sought to forge a vision of Anglican Christianity with a firmer and deeper metaphysical support and in which evangelicalism’s excesses or defects were excised or tempered (such as the Evangelical propensity toward anti-intellectualism), but which nevertheless remained at its core a vision of *Evangelical* Anglicanism.

I recognize that this argument will surely raise a few eyebrows and may even elicit a visceral rejection from some whose primary understanding (and, in some cases, misunderstanding) of evangelicalism arises from its modern instantiations. Those familiar with Coleridge’s thought may be inclined to respond that Coleridge never explicitly identified as an Evangelical and was ambivalent or even hostile toward Methodism. To the first claim, I would respond that while true that Coleridge does not appear to have ever put in ink or charcoal something to the effect of “I positively identify myself as an Evangelical,” this proves relatively inconsequential to my thesis. In late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, even well-established Evangelicals exhibited a reticence to identify as “Evangelical,” preferring “Gospel Clergy,” for fear of giving the appearance of belonging to a distinct Church party and thus promoting schism. Second, “Evangelical” remained, more-often-than-not, a designation for a kind of *clergyperson* rather than a designation for all who subscribed to this approach to Anglicanism. Third, Coleridge actually *did* come to explicitly identify a closer (if not perfectly aligned) affinity for Evangelical clergy over their non-Evangelical counterparts. Combined with the first two points, the third demonstrates that Coleridge came remarkably close to an explicit identification with Evangelicalism. As to his ambivalence toward Methodism, if one combines this with Coleridge’s affinity for other Evangelical theological emphases, this point strengthens my proposal. A

significant identifying marker of Evangelicals was an ambivalence toward Methodists and other dissenting evangelicals, whom they took to lack proper structure and checks on fanaticism.

For my argument to be both persuasive and meaningful, I believe that I have three increasingly stringent conditions to meet. First, Coleridge's orthodox Christianity had to maintain features characteristic of moderate Evangelical Anglicans while excluding those that were antithetical to late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Evangelicalism's essential character. However, this move is wholly perambulatory; it only shows that there is no significant *prima face* obstacle to considering Coleridge an Evangelical. Next, Coleridge must have come to a Christianity that included beliefs and practices that were *distinctively* Evangelical. In other words, it is not enough to show that Coleridge came to a kind of Christianity that had common elements with Evangelicalism if these elements were only those that Evangelicals themselves held in common with other strands of non-Evangelical Christianity.

Even at this second point, one is left with a significant claim, *viz.*, if one must locate Coleridge in relationship to definable larger Christian movements in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century British Christianity, he stood closest to moderate Evangelical Anglicanism. The thesis I am putting forward goes further still, though, and makes a claim not only of resemblance but of identity. While saying that it would be improper to consider Coleridge part of some other larger Christian movement, one could still argue that his was a *sui generis* Christianity that while refusing to be constrained to any larger movement was nevertheless closest to moderate Anglican Evangelicalism. To really stick the landing with my thesis, a third element is necessary. I must show that on all or most of those points where Coleridge stands outside the mainstream of this tradition, there either existed figures with similar positions who were unquestionably

Evangelical *or* Coleridge came to these dissenting opinions through a kind of characteristically Evangelical logic.

Fulfilling all three of these conditions can only be accomplished by observing Coleridge's post-1805 Christianity against the backdrop of a fairly exhaustive analysis of forms of Christianity available to him as a well-read Englishman in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with exposure to Continental European and North American intellectual and religious traditions. For this reason, I have provided what I see as an exhaustive summary of the relationships between the religious traditions that fit this criterion. This survey looks at the commonalities that existed among all, or nearly all, religious traditions because of their belonging to this time and space, as well as the bilateral commonalities that differed depending on the specific religious movements in question. It will also look at movements with unique features when compared to other traditions in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. Taking my cue from 18<sup>th</sup> century scholars like Isabel Rivers, I speak here of "movements" and "traditions" rather than "schools of thought" or "theologies" because my classification understands forms of religiosity in a non-reductive way, taking seriously broader religious "cultures" or "styles" (e.g., characteristic literary genres, perceived opponents, perceptions of other groups, rhetorical conventions) in addition to formal beliefs and practices.<sup>34</sup> This evaluation of religious traditions in Britain's long 18<sup>th</sup> century will provide constellations or patterns of relationship between beliefs, practices, rhetorical styles, literary genres, etc., that allow these traditions to be individuated both by the relationship of commonalities they share with other traditions as well as any features that proved unique. With these constellations described, I will then apply this more expanded set of identifying criteria to

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Isabel Rivers's "Introduction" in the first volume of her *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A study of the language of religion and ethics in England 1660-1780*, vol. I *Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991) for a more detailed explanation of the need to see religious movements or trends as defined by more than formal, explicit beliefs and practices.

Coleridge's Christianity from the period after his return to Trinitarian orthodoxy, which I believe will prove sufficiently persuasive to show that one can confidently locate the kind of orthodox Christianity he adopted within the constellation of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Evangelical Anglicanism.

The chapters of this dissertation essentially follow the two-part division described in the preceding paragraph. The first two content chapters attempt to map out the religious landscape for Britain in the (religious) long 18<sup>th</sup> century (or roughly the time of the Restoration until the Oxford Movement) in which Coleridge's own Christianity could plausibly be located. Chapter two deals with all the movements that would be considered "non-" or even "anti-evangelical." This chapter begins with a description of the evolution of a strand of "radical rationalism" from the Deism of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with its greater hostility to Christianity and more combative rhetoric, to the more irenic and optimistic Unitarianism of the later 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This broad approach tended to elevate the role of human intellectual capacities, saw the unknown as either the merely undiscovered or as unimportant, rejected almost all appeals to special revelation or "supernaturalism," and saw individual vices and social evils as resulting from errors and ignorance to be solved by education and reform rather than inherent corruptions in need of divine grace. There also existed a group of apologists who doctrinally shared more in common with either Latitudinarian or orthodox Christians and positioned themselves explicitly against this "radical rationalist" assault on Christianity, but who nevertheless shared with them a common methodological temperament. The fittingly expansive category of "Latitudinarians," who can be thought of as the theological moderates of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at large and the main body of liberals in the Church of England, make up the second group under consideration. This group drew from various methodological viewpoints, but uniting them was an acceptance of a chastened Christian orthodoxy with fewer necessary doctrines that

could be open to greater interpretation; a strong emphasis on the role of religion as supporting morality and social order; and a view of the “supernatural” with room for miracles and (some) special revelation but which downplayed the role of “mystery.” The final group were the “Orthodox” or “High Church” who constituted the majority half of non-evangelical 18<sup>th</sup> century “orthodoxy.” This group formally held most of the same doctrines as their evangelical counterparts, but they emphasized ecclesial mediation of saving grace and, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, were almost exclusively Laudian style Arminians. All three traditions shared a suspicion of “enthusiasm” and believed that salvation was in some way contingent upon good works.

The third chapter looks at evangelicalism as a larger movement in the long 18<sup>th</sup> century before turning to features that distinguished first and second generation Anglican Evangelicalism from the larger evangelical revival. As a broader movement, evangelicalism shared a sense of the need for a living and personal faith and relationship with God and saw this relationship as the true goal of salvation rather than a means to attaining it. While generally accepting the same formal doctrines as High Church Anglicans, evangelicals emphasized original sin and human depravity; justification by faith alone through God’s grace, the need for repentance, conversion, and New Birth; and subsequent growth in holiness through the inner working of the Holy Spirit. Evangelicals in the broader sense could be Arminian or Calvinist, although the Arminians emphasized justification by faith alone to a greater degree than their non-Evangelical counterparts and the Calvinists emphasized human agency and moral responsibility to a greater degree than theirs. Evangelicals emphasized some degree of emotional fervor in true Christianity, even if they diverged on the degree of outward expression it warranted. Anglican Evangelicals were distinguished from the larger evangelical movement, particularly in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, by a more circumscribed emotionalism, less emphasis on immediate conversions



and greater emphasis on a process of gradual growth in holiness, and a high view of the liturgy and polity of the Church of England. They were distinguished from non-Evangelical Anglicans in a greater emphasis on the rule of Scripture, a sense of the Church of England as in its essence a true Reformation Church, and a positive acceptance of doctrines cast disparagingly by most other groups as “Calvinist.”

The fourth through sixth chapters locate Coleridge’s orthodox Christianity as it emerged explicitly after 1805 in the religious landscape described above. Together, chapters four and five present Coleridge’s theology and theologically informed philosophy as they bear on the question of his relationship to Evangelicalism. In chapter four I argue that Coleridge’s explicit doctrinal summaries, which remained consistent from the time soon after his conversion to orthodoxy until only a few years before his death, give the same doctrines with the same emphasis that characterized the larger evangelical movement. The discussion of Coleridge’s doctrinal summaries becomes the occasion for an exploration of Coleridge’s own statements about his affinity with Anglican Evangelicalism, even though he perceived the Evangelicals to be lacking in historical and metaphysical learning. A discussion of Coleridge’s understanding of the relationship between the will and intellect allows me to argue that Coleridge in some way saw himself as shoring up these deficiencies, but that this does not necessarily mean he was attempting to move beyond Evangelicalism.

In chapter five I defend my concluding assumptions in chapter four by arguing that Coleridge’s more detailed treatments of theological themes present a theological vision that looks like what a more thorough and philosophically developed Anglican Evangelical theology would be. Beyond making original sin and the necessity of Christ’s redemptive work even more central to his thinking, Coleridge’s extended theological works also make clear that he held to

the kind of moderate Calvinist view of election that was, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, almost exclusively held by Anglican Evangelicals. Furthermore, Coleridge does not attempt to remove the ambiguity or appeal to mystery on those points that Anglican Evangelicals had come to avoid speculation, but instead supplies a rationalization for *why* one should appeal to mystery on these points. Coleridge does present a theory of redemption that subordinates a typical Evangelical emphasis on substitutionary atonement to the restorative dimensions of Christ's work, but even here he does so in a way that follows the logic of Evangelicalism. Furthermore, his was not the majority position, but it was still well within the boundaries of one minority, but unquestionably evangelical, strand of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican Evangelical thought.

I conclude my argument that the shape of Coleridge's orthodox Christianity should be considered within the bounds of Anglican Evangelicalism by looking beyond his explicit and explicated beliefs to such things as his religious language, sources of authority, forms of piety, and understanding of the church. Here I argue that not only does Coleridge *believe* like an Anglican Evangelical, but that he appears to have prayed, read the bible, argued, and, often, spoken like one. Among other things, Coleridge used language that was strongly associated with evangelical thought, spoke positively about Puritan thinkers, used quotations from Robert Leighton – one of the most highly revered thinkers for Anglican Evangelicals – to form the body of his most significant work of theology, and held to the more distinctively Evangelical position on Baptismal Regeneration. Between Coleridge's theological position, method, and doctrinal emphases aligning significantly with moderate Anglican Evangelicals and his embeddedness in a cultural imaginary that included almost every distinguishing mark of the same movement, I think that one can confidently affirm that Coleridge should be considered some kind of Anglican Evangelical.

I should note a few points about the scope and nature of my argument and the evidence I employ for it. First, I acknowledge that I did not include a thorough treatment of *all* the religious movements and theological positions that were, in the abstract, available to Coleridge. I discuss neither Eastern Orthodoxy nor Roman Catholicism, even though Coleridge knew of and interacted with both. Indeed, Coleridge had significant contact with Roman Catholic thought and held some thinkers in extremely high regard. Nevertheless, while I believe that Coleridge's engagement with Roman Catholicism is complex, interesting, and certainly deserves greater treatment than it has heretofore received, I do not include it among the religious background for the simple reason that Coleridge never gives any indication, serious or otherwise, that he considered becoming a Roman Catholic. Moreover, on no point of doctrine emphasized in Coleridge's thought on which there was a significant divergence between Roman Catholics and Protestants does Coleridge come down with a more characteristically Roman Catholic position. The other possibility I have left out is that I am drawing the circle too narrow by only looking at the *British* context and that Coleridge's orthodox Christianity, like his philosophy, owed more to German than British traditions. If this were the case, then the most likely form this religiosity would have taken would have been Moravian, given how highly he esteemed this group. However, since Moravians belong to the larger pietistic/evangelical tradition, Anglican Evangelicalism was significantly influenced by Moravians, and Coleridge remained within the ecclesial structures of the Church of England, I think my claim that he was some form of Evangelical Anglican would hold even if the kind exhibited strong affinities with the Moravians.

Some may also find it strange that I add the caveat that Coleridge had become a moderate Anglican Evangelical *by the time he died*. The reason for this inclusion is simple. I do not believe that Coleridge returned to orthodox Trinitarian Christianity with a fully formed Anglican

Evangelical theology. Instead, I believe he only gradually and unevenly came to affirm both the Anglican and the Evangelical designators, with the evangelical likely developing more quickly than the full embrace of the Anglican. However, this argument, as well as pin-pointing a specific point where he crosses this threshold, requires a more extensive reconstruction of Coleridge's spiritual and intellectual biography than I can provide in this space. I do draw on biographical information throughout this argument in an ad hoc fashion and provide an abbreviated sketch of what this more substantial reconstruction could look like in the conclusion, but I do this only to show that Coleridge had too much contact with evangelical and Evangelical thought for him to have plausibly developed into what looks like moderate Anglican Evangelicalism through a kind of religious convergent evolution. It does not provide enough support for an exact dating of his becoming an Anglican Evangelical, and since I draw significantly from Coleridge's work in the late 1820s and early 1830s, I think it safer to simply say that sometime before his death in 1834 he had become a moderate Anglican Evangelical.

The final chapter of the dissertation will tie together the strands of the argument, and will also sketch what a more comprehensive intellectual and spiritual autobiography of Coleridge may look like. However, this final chapter goes beyond a summary of the research and begins to point to how this new context of Coleridge's thought impacts how contemporary readers should engage him. It will serve as an entrée into a larger conversation concerning the need for greater clarity about the relationship of Coleridge's thought to other theological movements. In so doing, I hope to open the door to the ways in which understanding Coleridge as a kind of Anglican Evangelical can prove productive for contemporary theology in addition to intellectual history. While I alluded to the fact that Coleridge has received increasing interest as a potential source of inspiration for constructive theology, I did not go into the full significance of how his thought is

beginning to be employed. Likely because Coleridge was one of the most original theological voices in early 19<sup>th</sup> century England, understanding how he fits into the Christian tradition has become a cipher for a larger conflict over how constructive theology understands the tradition, engages with contemporary society, and moves forward into the future. In recent memory, the first significantly influential theologian to claim Coleridge for his project was John Milbank. He has implicitly claimed Coleridge as emblematic of a tradition of “counter-modernity” that can connect the contemporary Church with what he views as the unified and legitimate Christianity of the Middle Ages that was fractured and undermined by the social, political, and economic forces of the modern world. Milbank never explicitly admits as such, but one wonders if he has an interest in Coleridge because he allows this “counter-modernity” to run decisively through the Church of England. Against this vision of Coleridge as a figure who opposed the “universal” reason of the Enlightenment, Douglas Hedley has undertaken a project to understand Coleridge as presenting a unified vision of human knowledge and the universality of human reason that actually may provide a way past the fractured and fideistic state of knowledge he believes thinkers like Milbank perpetuate.

Milbank’s attempt warrants attention for showing that Coleridge, while certainly not representative of mainstream 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican theology, demonstrates that the Anglican tradition is not a newcomer to the theological big leagues. Furthermore, while this project does not call for significant alterations to what has already been developed regarding Coleridge’s thought in and of itself, the reinterpretation of how that thought should be located in the theological tradition has substantial implications for the way in which the various theological traditions within Anglicanism relate to each other. Coleridge’s understanding of the doctrinal flexibility needed for a national church has long been recognized as an important factor in the

emergence the Broad Church movement, and he also had a significant impact on leaders of the Oxford Movement, most notably John Henry Newman. The ability to see Coleridge as either most closely aligned with the Anglican Evangelical tradition or even as an extraordinary, but still legitimate, member of that tradition would indicate that there may exist greater theological continuity between the competing streams of Anglican tradition than is usually recognized.

Nevertheless, I ultimately want to locate my work in the same camp as Hedley. While I have chosen to focus on a different aspect of Coleridge's philosophical and religious thought, I do not think this project any substantial rejection of his interpretation of Coleridge's place in the theological or philosophical tradition.<sup>35</sup> In many ways, this project is undertaken in the same spirit, seeking both to further clarify Coleridge's position in the history of ideas and in so doing take away some of the ambiguities that have allowed him to be interpreted in a way that bends his thought to that of Milbank. This casting of Coleridge as a kind of proponent of a proto-Radical Orthodoxy distorts Coleridge's unitive and conciliatory vision. Coleridge can serve as a figure of significant influence in contemporary theology, but it is not by simply making him a mouthpiece for theological and philosophical concerns that were not his own – particularly when this means stretching him over Radical Orthodoxy's procrustean bed that makes him little more than symbolically important and often takes his work out of context to support views at odds with his own larger vision. However, before this project can start, it is necessary to first understand how Coleridge fit into and challenged the intellectual and religious climate of his time, and it is to this task that I now turn.

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<sup>35</sup> I do not mean that I accept Hedley's interpretation uncritically. I think Hedley does less to distort the content of Coleridge's thought than Milbank, but I see in his attempt to positon Coleridge as a 19<sup>th</sup> century Cambridge Platonist something of the same tendency to employ Coleridge in the service of a national intellectual tradition. I would not argue in any way that Coleridge was, in his evangelicalism, not a kind of Platonist – but it was not uncommon for evangelicals to be influenced by Platonism of some kind. Instead, I think it safer to say that Coleridge developed his own form of broadly Platonist philosophy that found its most fitting partner in the Augustinian (and thus Christian Platonic) spirit of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican Evangelicalism.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AT THE END OF BRITAIN'S LONG 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

My central claim that Coleridge had become some kind of Anglican Evangelical is at one level a simple enough proposition. One need only a thorough and accurate description of early British evangelicalism, a thorough and accurate account of Coleridge's mature religious thought, and a persuasive analysis of how the latter fits within the confines of the former. However, providing a fair portrait both of evangelicalism and of Coleridge's own thought requires that both the man and the movement be located in the broader context of British religious thought in what I am calling the "religious long 18<sup>th</sup> century." Painting a picture of the larger landscape allows for greater definitional and explanatory precision since it clarifies commonalities as well as particularities of the various religious movements under consideration. This approach has the advantage of lessening any suspicion that I merely demonstrated that Coleridge held in common with evangelicalism those features commonly held by many or all contemporary religious movements. Therefore, before diving into a more detailed description of the character of early British evangelicalism in its multiple forms, I will use this chapter to point to the outlines of the various non-evangelical religious movements<sup>36</sup> that formed the backdrop against which Coleridge's own form of Christianity developed.

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<sup>36</sup> While nearly all the forms of religiosity that I consider identified themselves as a form of Christianity, I prefer the term "religious movements" to "Christian movements" or "forms of Christianity" because there were certain movements that self-consciously rejected claims to being Christian. While I recognize that one cannot fully escape normative judgements as to these sorts of things, the use of this language is not meant to imply that certain movements that claimed to be Christian were not in fact deserving of the label. A similar caveat goes for the use of "orthodoxy/orthodox" and "heterodoxy/heterodox." I employ such terms only for groups that took those titles for themselves or to describe how these systems of belief were viewed by their contemporaries.

I begin with a note of caution about the nature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century British religious landscape, particularly regarding the messiness of language used to identify individual groups. First, one encounters a period of polemic where fairly representing an opponent's views was not frequently an intellectual virtue, even if one created strawmen and knocked them down politely. Additionally, some of the descriptors, such as High Church, evangelical, orthodox, rationalist, moralist, etc., that a contemporary reader may now consider mutually exclusive were not necessarily seen in such oppositional relationships at the time, or they had meanings that shifted during the course of the long 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, politics, ecclesiology, and theology were very closely intertwined in 18<sup>th</sup> century British thinking, adding additional complications. Certain terms could slip between describing theological commitments and political affiliations depending on the perspective and motivations of an author at a given point in time. At the same time, while one must wade cautiously into the waters of 18<sup>th</sup> century religious identification, one should not yield to the temptation of thinking that it is impossible to mark off different movement. One may be faced with a turbulent sea of religious thought and practice, but this is still a sea with distinct and distinguishable currents in it.

Even if 18<sup>th</sup> century scholars often contend a great deal about the precise boundary markers between religious tendencies as well as how mutually exclusive certain of them were, the various categories themselves do not tend to be matters of great controversy.<sup>38</sup> This chapter

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<sup>37</sup> The most obvious example is that of "High Church." In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was a political descriptor (i.e., a synonym for Church Toryism) with some loose theological and liturgical associations, while by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it had come more to define a much more specific style of theology and liturgical preferences.

<sup>38</sup> One of the main issues in the interpretation of 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain is the degree to which certain ideas permeated the larger culture. For instance, there is a lively debate about whether the long 18<sup>th</sup> century should be considered ideologically a continuation of the *ancien régime* or the beginnings of a modernized society. However, such arguments generally turn on the degree to which certain ideas and practices permeated the larger culture and they often disagree about who played on what teams (was Paley truly non-Trinitarian, etc.); however, the arguments are not, by and large, about who the teams were.



will therefore move through the 18<sup>th</sup> century's theological trends (the ones pertinent to understanding Coleridge at least) in a way that will clarify each of their distinguishing features as well as their commonalities. I do not pretend to explore each movement exhaustively, but I do want a survey that sufficiently explores these options so that one can accurately locate Coleridge in relationship to them. This chapter does focus primarily on the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but to accurately gain a picture of this period one must go back to figures and movements of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (especially the Deists, Latitudinarians, and Non-Jurors). These movements helped to set the terms of the conversation and some continued to be viable theological options well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

I begin by presenting that religious tradition methodologically most determined by a commitment to "rationalism."<sup>39</sup> Deists set the stage for an 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition of religion largely or completely circumscribed by reason, even though this movement had died out for the most part by the 1750s. Following Deism was a religious tradition wholly bounded by reason, with the majority in this trajectory considering themselves wholly within the Christian tradition (such as Priestley's Unitarianism supported by Hartley's Lockean naturalism) and with a very small minority, such minimal theists and an exceptionally small number of true atheists, that saw themselves outside of Christianity. The Deists occasioned a response from some orthodox (or at least *more* orthodox) thinkers, particularly Bishop Butler and then William Paley, who sought to defend traditional Christian doctrines and conceptions of revelation. Nevertheless, they still

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<sup>39</sup> I frequently use the terms "rational," "rationalist," and "rationalism" throughout this text. This usage must be differentiated from the more technical distinction in the history of modern philosophy in which "Rationalism" stands as an epistemological commitment distinguished from "Empiricism." With few exceptions, I mean by "rational" simply "pertaining to human reasoning capabilities, however they are conceived." Unless otherwise stated (as for instance, in describing Coleridge's distinction between "reason" and "understanding"), "rationalism" and related terms do not refer to a commitment to innate ideas and opposition to empiricism. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of 18<sup>th</sup> century British "rationalist" thinkers were empiricists of one sort or another.

belong to this larger “rationalist” category because they argued for these doctrines in a methodologically similar way to the Deists and the Deists’ rationalist heirs.

I look next at the Latitudinarian tradition, which began in the late seventeenth century and for the most part established the dominant tone for the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Church of England. “Latitudinarianism” represents a shift to a much broader category of thinkers, and one defined by a set of political and social goals as much as doctrinal or intellectual commitments. A diverse range of positions can be gathered accurately under the umbrella of “Latitudinarianism” as a movement because of a shared desire for minimizing the required set of Christian beliefs needed to be included in or tolerated by the Church of England. Because of the de-emphasized status of religious belief, Latitudinarians tended toward a common ethical vision of Christianity and the ability for such a vision to improve society, which in turn tolerated or fostered a principally moralistic approach to Christianity.

The next chapter will deal extensively with evangelicalism, but evangelicalism can be thought of as part of a movement within a larger trend that can be deemed “orthodox.” This current chapter will thus conclude with the non-evangelical orthodox Christians of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a group that happened to be principally High Church Anglicans. Political High Churchmanship (even if it often implied certain liturgical and theological commitments) stands at the beginning of this 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition, although the movements through which 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century High Churchmen trace their lineage increasingly inverted the priority between political and liturgical and theological identification. What would distinguish this group more than any other from other religious traditions at the time, including others who would have held to “orthodox” interpretations of the 39 Articles, was the extremely high view they held of the Church as the mediator of salvation through properly administered sacraments performed by

a church hierarchy supported by the authority of apostolic succession. This group also came, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, to identify themselves explicitly against what they saw as “Calvinism.”

The 18<sup>th</sup> century religious was significantly tempered by, and resulted from, the social, political, and intellectual trends and events of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The dramatic increases in knowledge of the natural world brought about by a Post-Baconian approach to the experimental sciences imparted an optimism that humans could free themselves, through the exercise of reason, not only from slavery to ignorance and nature, but also to despotic political regimes. While “a wide variety of influences” worked to bring about this intellectual climate, Isaac Newton, the champion of the new experimental science, and John Locke, who provided the philosophical scaffolding for the new approach to natural science as well as the theoretical basis for political and social liberalism, became the symbols of intellectual authority against which 18<sup>th</sup> century thought had to measure itself.<sup>40</sup> While the tendency toward an empirical epistemology has a history in British thought that predates even Bacon and Hobbes, Locke and Newton did serve, probably more than any other figures, to establish this approach to human intellectual endeavors as *the* principle “British” style. Under the shadow of their achievements, and often invoking their authority, 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers sought to extend this Lockean-Newtonian model beyond natural science and philosophy to politics, economics, and even social reform.

Without downplaying the importance of Locke and Newton for informing the spirit of the age, one must also account for the significant role played by the political, religious, and social turmoil of the greater part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century for the development of the 18<sup>th</sup> century British cultural imaginary. Granted, Britain did not experience the same kind of overwhelming

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<sup>40</sup> Gerald R. Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 5.

devastation that the wars of religion brought to much Continental Europe.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, while it may not have been *as* jarring as the 30 Years War, the English Civil War, the execution of Charles I, and the interregnum proliferation of radical religious sects with their equally radical views of society and morality did have a profoundly unsettling effect on vast swathes of British society, giving the impression of a “world turned upside down.” The scale of loss of life in these conflicts, in which a larger percentage of the population may have died than in the First World War, “was alone enough to cause significant national trauma.”<sup>42</sup> However, the attempt to rectify the situation through the draconian, and plausibly vindictive, imposition of religious and political uniformity during the Restoration proved equally unpalatable to many. Several consequences for 18<sup>th</sup> century religious life reverberated out from these events. Some saw “Puritanism” as the principle disruptive force, which led to an aversion to forms of piety or theology associated with “Puritans.” Others saw a problem not in particular sects, but rather in *any* attempt at uniform imposition of doctrines and practices, which made more room for an openness to restricted doctrinal systems and greater toleration of differing systems of belief, polity, and liturgical practice. The perceived increase in libertinism that accompany James II’s policy of religious toleration could lead equally to seeing Christianity as needing to function principally as an agent of *moral* reform as to calling for a strengthened national church with a strictly enforced policy of ecclesial uniformity. The more radical groups imparted to almost everyone a tendency to equate “enthusiasm” with “fanaticism,” meaning that subsequent groups had to avoid – or at least defend – practices associated with these earlier movements. Those in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at least

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<sup>41</sup> This may help explain why by and large even the more extreme British proponents of rationality did not seek to unsettle Christianity, or at least a religion based on a purified Christianity, whereas the Enlightenment as it unfolded in France was much more closely linked to hostility toward Christianity or even religion in general.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Braddick, *God’s Fury, England’s Fire* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2008), Kindle, loc. 168.

among the educated classes, held that the “civilized man... would be wise to adhere to his beliefs sedately and in a reasonable spirit.”<sup>43</sup>

In line with Charles Taylor’s description of one’s “social imaginary” being determined by both ideal *and* material conditions, it seems clear that the most profoundly influential forces related to 18<sup>th</sup> century thought were neither wholly the result of systems of thought constructed proactively and objectively, nor of a set of general non-reflexive emotional, political, and social reactions that later received intellectual support.<sup>44</sup> Intellectual concerns did likely prove the primary motivations for some thinkers. However, even Locke, the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s primary philosophical touchstone, seems not only to have been a cause for and architect of liberal notions of religious toleration, but his work was also in part occasioned by a larger social and political movement in that direction. On the other hand, many, even among the “educated,” found themselves averse to “enthusiasm,” “fanaticism,” “Puritanism,” or “Popery” less from intellectual than emotional forces that rested on an unreflective sense that whatever was associated with these nebulous ideas went against the emerging norms of “polite society,” undercut social or national stability, or conflicted with a proper English (or Scottish, or Welsh, or British) character and were thus treasonous.

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<sup>43</sup> G. R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 13.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Taylor’s understanding of a “social imaginary” acts as an ever-present subterranean influence on my argument. Taylor understands the “social imaginary” as something like the set of acknowledged and unacknowledged ideas, modes of reasoning, and practices that a group considers acceptable at any given time. Often these boundaries are so ubiquitous that they are only recognized through deeper reflection on one’s place in society, if at all. This concept does not imply that thinkers cannot on an individual level come up with ideas that do not fit within the social imaginary (an isolated person is not determined by their social imaginary), but it does imply that new ideas will rarely gain traction in the larger society without corresponding changes to the imaginary. My attempt to look beyond the explicit beliefs and practices of religious movements is an attempt to discern the fabric of the “social imaginaries” of the various distinguishable religious movements in Britain at that time. For more information on this concept, look at Taylor’s *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 159-211. The discussion of the relationship between the material and ideal follows on pp. 212-218.

The first larger tendency in 18<sup>th</sup> century British thought under consideration could be thought of as the attempt to wholly establish – and, in rare cases, disestablish – religious belief on a foundation of what unaided human rational capacities can know. One should see this more as a broad methodological disposition rather than as a set of organized positions, and the various ways of further distinguishing tendencies within this “style” present different degrees of coherence as specific schools.

Deists were possibly the most infamous of groups considered within this broader category, although their influence (or perceived menace) was certainly disproportionately higher than the actual influence they exerted on larger religious sentiments and the strong critical response they engendered.<sup>45</sup> “Deists” may have shared “a common outlook,” but they “never constituted a cohesive group” or “established anything approaching a school of thought,” and “made no attempt to discipline idiosyncrasy or to exclude individual caprice.”<sup>46</sup> Samuel Clarke, a proponent of rational religion but not himself a true Deist, distinguished four forms of Deism. The first group included those who believed that God exists, but that this God remained completely unconcerned with any interaction with the world.<sup>47</sup> The second group went further and accepted a providential dimension to God’s activity, but rejected the idea that God concerned Himself with human morality, since this morality could only have been founded on arbitrary human laws. The third group included those who accepted the perfection of God’s moral attributes, but who accepted no future state of reward or punishment. Finally, the fourth

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<sup>45</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 64.

<sup>46</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 63.

<sup>47</sup> This first group begins to border on, or has possibly already entered the territory of, what may even be considered “minimal theism,” a category that can also describe David Hume’s religious beliefs. There is certainly no reason to believe otherwise, but this would mean that “minimal theism” as a set of beliefs about God could admit of a great deal of hostility among its own members, since Hume was at least as critical of the Deists’ confidence in human rationality as of those who had faith in the claims of revelation.

approach held to the existence of a creator God of perfect moral goodness deserving human adoration as well as continued human existence after death when humans would be rewarded or punished.<sup>48 49</sup>

Brooks Holifield provides additional distinctions within Deism, this time according to their view of the Bible and their view of the goal of religion in general. Some Deists accepted that *some* of the Bible, so long as it reinforced what reason had independently discovered, *could* be accepted. Others showed contempt for any use of the Bible: “the first group saw themselves as contributing to a reform of Christian thought in accord with eighteenth-century norms of reason; the second group believed that a natural religion should replace Christian superstition.”<sup>50</sup> In Clarke’s fourfold division, one likely saw proponents of the third and fourth varieties defending Deism as a form of purified Christianity, while those within the first two divisions would have seen their purified religion as moving beyond or supplanting Christianity.<sup>51</sup>

Despite allowing for significant latitude regarding specific belief, Deism as a “common outlook” still shared common methodological features and beliefs. Deists had an extremely high view of unaided human reason, both in terms of its value and capacities. They believed that the

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<sup>48</sup> Ernest Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England: 1688-1791* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 260-61. I have summarized Rupp’s own presentation of Clarke’s views.

<sup>49</sup> While this last group appears very similar to certain Latitudinarian views discussed below, what distinguished them as Deists was their belief that all of these ideas were discoverable by reason alone and that one should not rely upon divine revelation.

<sup>50</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 159-60.

<sup>51</sup> This division likely makes Deism unique even among other radical religious movements in Britain at the time; while others, particularly Unitarians (who will be discussed below), accepted that human reason could develop a true and complete system of religious thought entirely of its own power, almost every other movement saw itself as having a *greater* claim to “true” Christianity than the defenders of doctrinal orthodoxy. Deism appears to be the only identifiable *movement* to include those who rejected Christianity. This is not to say that there were not those who rejected both Christianity and non-Christian Deism, but at least during the eighteenth century these tended to be based on *sui generis* reasoning or systems of thought. There were other minimal theists, skeptics, agnostics, and even atheists in Britain during this time. However, even on this point, the number of people who openly positioned themselves as true atheists was exceedingly low and while this group could include influential *individuals*, such as William Goodwin or the young Robert Southey, their *atheism* rarely figured significantly in that influence.

“light of nature was sufficient for the solution of all religious and philosophical problems.”<sup>52</sup>

Stripped of the darkness of superstition and ignorance, human beings could through reason attain to everything humans should ever need to know. For some this optimism about innate human capacities might even lead to the belief that unaided human reason could in principle arrive at *everything* knowable. Whether purifying or supplanting Christianity, Deists advocated for a “natural religion,” meaning free of appeals to supernatural revelation, that they “regarded as simple in itself and sufficient for every human need.”<sup>53</sup> Bishop Butler’s arguments against Deism indicate that Deists held to a certain enlightenment optimism in which humans (or at least men) were as a rule equally capable of using their rational capacities in this way.<sup>54</sup> Matthew Tindal, whose *Christianity as Old as the Creation* represented a significant argument for Deism, held that since the nature of God never changes, “God must always have treated all men in precisely the true same way.” Thus, God “must always have made uniformly accessible to all the knowledge both to recognize and to discharge their duties.”<sup>55</sup>

As implied in the title of the Deist John Toland’s work *Christianity not Mysterious*, Deism rejected any positive notion of mystery and, with this rejection, the need for revelation in religion. This rejection of mystery came close to a categorical acceptance that nothing in principle existed beyond the bounds of discovery through rational human inquiry. On one hand, this position flowed from an optimism about the advances being made in the natural sciences: “The mounting authority of Newtonian physics inspired the hope that all branches of knowledge could be reduced to a few, simple, uniform laws which any educated man could understand and

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<sup>52</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 64.

<sup>53</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 64.

<sup>54</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 122.

<sup>55</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 69.



every reasonable person would accept.”<sup>56</sup> At the same time, Deists suspected that the clergy intentionally invoked “mystery” to ensure that reason remained unexercised and so that they could control the masses. Toland understood “mysteries” to be “esoteric, arcane doctrines which the priests claim to guard and which they put forward for the acceptance of the faithful.”<sup>57</sup> This second reason for rejection of mystery flowed in large part from the trauma of the 17<sup>th</sup> century wars of religion. For the Deists, these conflicts demonstrated that appeals to *any* of the ancient standards of authority, whether the monarchy, scripture, or ecclesial dogma, failed to mediate conflict in a helpful way. Deists therefore hoped to “emancipate human reason from any kind of eternal control” and they saw appeals to any other as invalid and, often, malicious.<sup>58</sup>

Deists likewise shared enough rhetorical tactics that one can fairly understand them as having a distinct theological “style.” Like many who would succeed them, Deists claimed Locke as their principle intellectual founder and source of authority. Locke was not himself a Deist and even “indignantly repudiated the inferences which they drew from him,” but the Deists still “insisted that they derived all their principles from him.”<sup>59</sup> While Deist likely believed themselves to be furthering the spirit of Locke’s work, they frequently advanced their positions through select quotations from non-Deist or even anti-Deist thinkers. For instance, “Tindal’s favorite stratagem was to advance his work under cover of quotations from Clarke, Sherlock, Tenison, or Wake” and Deists in general were “effusive in their praise for Tillotson.”<sup>60</sup> Regardless of the degree that individual Deists felt they maintained the spirit of these other

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<sup>56</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 66.

<sup>57</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 261.

<sup>58</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 65.

<sup>59</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 66.

<sup>60</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 64.

thinkers, this technique doubtless formed part of a calculated strategy to legitimate their position in the public eye.

Because of their optimism about the universality of human reason, Deists presented their arguments to a broader audience than was customary for their theological contemporaries. This expanded audience had stylistic implications that reached far beyond the Deists. Far from only wanting to influence an intellectual elite, Deists proved themselves “as eager to modify the outlook of the ordinary reader as to modify the views of theological experts.”<sup>61</sup> They wrote in a direct and informal style popularized in the coffee houses.<sup>62</sup> The appropriation of this style had the effect of raising the “standard of intelligibility” for religious discourse, as well as democratizing access to it. Effectively countering the Deist position required opponents “to match the simplicity and directness which marked the Deists’ writing.”<sup>63</sup>

While this Deistic style certainly had its virtues, other features of their rhetoric proved less benign. 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century conventions for what constituted “civil” discourse allowed considerably harsher rhetoric than do contemporary standards for intellectual charity, and even in that context the Deists’ opponents regularly accused them of engaging in disrespectful, hypocritical, and underhanded strategies to sway readers. Deists “frequently demanded that their cases be heard with all possible gravity” while using ridicule as a standard rhetorical weapon.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 64.

<sup>62</sup> This point speaks to the way in which Deists saw themselves. Coffee houses often sprung up next to Britain’s ancient universities and served as primary meeting places and venues to discuss ideas excluded from the universities, such as the new science or modern developments in philosophy. By appropriating this style of writing, the Deists were not only able to reach a larger audience, they were associating themselves with an institution that symbolized a challenge to established norms for intellectual authority. See Brian Cowan’s *The Social Life of Coffee* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), particularly ch. 4, for a description of the coffee house’s relationship to the university, as well as the role coffee houses played to disseminate new modes of knowledge.

<sup>63</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 62. Many of the defenders of orthodoxy had to adapt not only to the positions argued for by Deists, but also to their mode of argumentation itself.

<sup>64</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 73.

While characterizing themselves as champions of reason as the only measure of truth and charging orthodox Christianity with intellectual obfuscation, Deists regularly used innuendo in place of direct argument and “consistently implied more than they were willing to state.”<sup>65</sup> In one of the most damning instances of Deistic duplicity, Collins made free use of “careless references, inexact quotations, inaccurate translations, misconceptions, and distortions” in his *Discourse on Free Thinking* (of all titles).<sup>66</sup> Such was the state of Deist rhetoric that even those who may have sympathized with a more rational Christianity found the Deists’ writings “intolerable.” William Whiston, for instance, professed Arianism but could not abide the “amused contempt” with which Collins’s *Discourse* treated subjects that Whiston thought deserving of greater respect.<sup>67</sup>

A final, and likely among the most unpalatable, characteristic of Deistic conventions was a strong inclination toward anti-Semitism: “The one people, the one religion which really got under [the Deists’] skins, was Judaism.”<sup>68</sup> In Judaism they saw only a “repulsive blend of ritual and superstition” all carried out “in the name of a cruel and savage Deity.” This perspective prevented any recognition of “the Hebraic traditions of mercy and of righteousness.”<sup>69</sup> In contrast, the Deists held the ancient Greeks and Romans in the highest regard. Deists certainly did not initiate the revival of interest in pagan Hellenistic thought, but they did embrace it with passion.<sup>70</sup> In a way that prefigured Gibbon’s attitudes, Deists saw educated pagan Greeks and

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<sup>65</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 73.

<sup>66</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 74.

<sup>67</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 73-74.

<sup>68</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 259.

<sup>69</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 259.

<sup>70</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 260.

Romans as models for a properly ordered society because they possessed an ability to see through the fog of superstition and ritual in their own age.

Contemporary proponents of orthodoxy believed that Deism's attempt to appeal to a broader audience posed one of the most pressing threats to Christianity at the time. The orthodox counter-attack against the Deists proved extremely effective, and this cause could count among its ranks some 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain's greatest mind, including Bentley, Berkeley, Swift, Sherlock, and Joseph Butler. As the century progressed, Deism found itself fighting an intellectual war on a second front as skeptics like David Hume challenged the conception of reason, human knowledge, and nature that served as its intellectual foundation. Insofar as it drew sustenance popular appeal, Deism encountered increasing competition for the minds, and especially hearts, of the British people as the flames of revival grew hotter and brighter in the 1730s and 40s. By the 1740s Deist publications "were no longer sensational."<sup>71</sup> For a movement that had sustained itself in large part by the controversy it had engendered, this loss not only signaled, but helped precipitate, Deism's twilight. By the 1750s, "the cause seems to have withered" and Deism no longer could no longer claim any significant territory in the British intellectual landscape.<sup>72</sup>

While no longer an active option by Coleridge's time, Deism nonetheless shaped the theological discourse and religious culture that was. Deism made more space within the 18<sup>th</sup> century British social imaginary for a theology that appealed to no more than the unaided human intellect. At the same time, it helped established the boundary markers for this kind of inquiry; for the rest of the 18<sup>th</sup> and into the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries no, or almost no, theological trends that could draw enough followers to constitute actual movements would present themselves as

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<sup>71</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 276.

<sup>72</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 276.

“moving beyond” or replacing Christianity. Polemics of the time certainly made liberal use of “atheist” as a term of abuse, but it almost always applied to “someone who does not believe in God correctly” rather than someone who explicitly denied the existence of God.<sup>73</sup>

The movement that *did* exercise considerable influence on Coleridge, and, in many ways, did so for his whole life, was the theological outlook that continued the spirit (if not temper) of Deism: Unitarianism. Specifically, the Unitarianism of the great English polymath Joseph Priestley, which wed the general theological outlook, themes, and disposition of the Unitarians with David Hartley’s physio-psychology philosophy, came to frame most of Coleridge’s religious development. Without providing a detailed survey of these thinkers, I will attempt to present enough about their goals, intellectual commitments, and general outlook to understand the religious and philosophical system that Coleridge so enthusiastically embraced in his early adulthood and then vehemently rejected during his middle and later years.<sup>74</sup>

Some historical context will help with an understanding of the specifics of Priestley’s Unitarianism. At this point, I need to delve more deeply into how ecclesial history and identification were linked to the development of different theological, philosophical, and political affiliations. Some Anglicans certainly sympathized with Unitarian theology (although such sympathies would have had to have been held more or less secretly depending on how strongly one’s bishop or priest thought it necessary to enforce subscription to the 39 Articles),

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<sup>73</sup> See Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 34-5. It would not be until the early Victorian era that atheism and skepticism became truly viable possibilities, first in a limited way because of the challenge posed by German critical biblical scholarship and second in a substantial way by Charles Darwin’s claims about human evolution and natural selection. While the dominance in the later 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century of a so-called “evidential” approach to apologetics and theology, which will be discussed below, played a considerable role in letting these developments prove so destructive to faith, this unraveling is a story for another day.

<sup>74</sup> This rejection could be so strong at points that it appears that Hartley’s and Priestley’s thought still held sway over Coleridge, but now in the negative sense that he distanced himself from positions which were associated with this other system and in some cases one wonders if he intentionally adopted positions that this other system rejected.

but Unitarianism properly describes a theological *and* denominational tradition that emerged first among certain Nonconformists before becoming its own independent dissenting body.

The established Church in England prior to, during, and after the Reformation had always contended with some groups that sought to establish themselves either as alternatives to or replacements for the state ecclesial body.<sup>75</sup> However, with the exception of some few separatist groups such as the Brownists, from the beginning of the Henrician Reformation through the English Civil War, most theological and ecclesiological dissent came from those claiming fidelity to the state church and were truly internal disputes about how to properly structure the polity, liturgy, and theology of the Church of England. Only with the Restoration Settlement after the English Civil War and the push for a strict enforcement of the 1660 Act of Uniformity did most Dissent become a significant alternative to the established church. Some decided to leave the state church on their own. For others, who would have remained part of the established church but would not subscribe to every part of the new Act of Uniformity, it was the Church of England that rejected them.<sup>76</sup>

Some Nonconformist bodies originated in traditions that sought to reform the state church prior to the Civil War, such as the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Other groups, such as Quakers and Baptists, emerged from theological traditions that gained more prominence during the intense religious foment of the Civil War itself.<sup>77</sup> The changes in the intellectual climate

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<sup>75</sup> The Lollards are probably the most recognizable of these groups in the pre-Reformation church.

<sup>76</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 105. Most notably in the Great Ejection of 1662.

<sup>77</sup> Polity, rather than doctrine, primarily divided the first two groups, with the Presbyterians calling for more interconnection, greater uniformity of liturgical practice, and less independence in governance of local congregations and the Independents calling for almost complete autonomy for local congregations. Both traditions, however, had similar theological outlooks, and by the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century they tended to have the same range of theological distinctions. Both groups traced their origins to the English Reformed tradition, but out of this tradition there emerged those committed to strict or hyper-Calvinism, others who held to a more moderate Calvinism (such as Richard Baxter), and even some Arminians. The Baptists held to a polity that emphasized congregational

accompanying the transition into the 18<sup>th</sup> century had the effect of moving many Dissenters, often within the same ecclesial structures, along opposite ideological trajectories. On the one hand, a “vehement hyper-Calvinism” appeared in response to the feeling among some Calvinists that the Deism, Socinianism, and Arianism of the age could be “put down to the sinister influence of Arminian and Baxterian notions.”<sup>78</sup> This hyper-Calvinism, which emphasized God’s sovereignty to the point of rejecting even evangelism as a presumptive invasion by humans of “the sphere of God’s sovereign grace,” found its greatest theological proponent in John Gill and its primary ecclesial outlet in the formation of the Strict Baptists.<sup>79</sup>

At the same time, Dissent also created the conditions for the flourishing of the most liberal theological outlooks of the time. One can view this as the result of the political and social exclusion that accompanied membership in a dissenting body. Employment by the state and education at Britain’s ancient universities required both subscription to the 39 Articles and acknowledged membership in the Church of England, thus disqualifying Dissenters from military and other government positions as well as excluding them from education at Oxford and Cambridge. This led to Dissenters increasingly identifying with the Whigs, both because Whigs were the historic party of trade and industry (professions that did not exclude Dissenters) and because Whigs favored more expansive policies of religious toleration.<sup>80</sup>

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autonomy, and could also count themselves part of the Reformed tradition, but they tended to disavow formal learning more than the Congregationalists and also held beliefs more in concert with the Anabaptists, such as a rejection of infant Baptism and greater propensity for a memorialist understanding of Baptism and Eucharist. On other doctrinal matters, Baptists also split along Arminian and Calvinist lines, and various Baptist organizations emerged in line with these distinctions. The Quakers represent the most distinct of the Nonconformist groups: they had a theology which emphasized the inner witness of the Spirit and some distinctive interpretations of traditional doctrines, even if they did not explicitly disavow most traditional Christian doctrine. They also were distinguished by their practice and ethics. They were firm pacifists, they eschewed any formal structure in liturgy and rejected any sacraments, and tended to be highly egalitarian (for the time) in their understanding of the social order.

<sup>78</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 487.

<sup>79</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 487.

Furthermore, exclusion from the universities led dissenting groups, particularly the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, to establish their own academies to ensure that they had access to higher education. These academies often provided far better educations than Oxford or Cambridge could offer. Because they lacked the institutional inertia that favored long entrenched educational methods, dissenting academies proved more accepting of contemporary scientific and philosophical approaches, resulting in “a ‘progressive’ outlook” pervading many of the academies early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>81</sup> While many who oversaw these academies remained orthodox in their own beliefs, they nevertheless “encouraged free inquiry” by students.<sup>82</sup> For instance, John Jennings “did not restrict himself to a single theological position” in his instruction and “would defend in turn Calvinist, Baxterian, and Arminian views.”<sup>83</sup> Explicitly heterodox teaching became more and more pervasive, particularly in the west and the north of England. At Daventry, some of the tutors explicitly confessed Arian beliefs by the time that Joseph Priestley became a student there, and while serving as a tutor at Warrington he claimed that all the tutors were at least Arians – if not “well on the road to Socinianism.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 106. This point does not mean that one should infer heterodox belief from a favorable stance toward toleration. One could of course remain personally orthodox in belief while arguing against a need for everyone to subscribe to orthodoxy. Nevertheless, such pushes for tolerance created more room for Arian and Socinian beliefs to grow (Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 37).

<sup>81</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 37.

<sup>82</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 37.

<sup>83</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 37.

<sup>84</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 38. Socinianism was a general theological trend originating in the writings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian theologian Faustus Socinius (Fausto Paolo Sozzini), but it came to cover a wide range of thinkers who denied both the divinity of Christ and affirmed the absolute oneness and unity of God. Thus, Socinians held to what may be called “theological Unitarianism,” but they were not necessarily confined to one ecclesial affiliation. Arians (and we may now term them more properly “neo-Arians”) or Subordinationists were those who still held to the divinity of Christ, and could consider themselves Trinitarian (often claiming to have the more authentic Trinitarian doctrine). However, like those in the early church who held views that would be deemed the “Arian heresy,” they believed that Jesus’ divinity was somehow subordinate to or metaphysically inferior to that of the Father.



A divide opened and grew wider within Presbyterian and Congregationalist congregations between those adhering to orthodox Christian doctrine and those that moved by stages from moderate Calvinism to Arminianism to Arianism and finally to explicitly Socinian beliefs. By 1770 “barely half the Presbyterian congregations were Trinitarian in belief... and in due course became explicitly Unitarian.”<sup>85</sup> While Presbyterians proved more accepting than any other dissenting group of heterodoxy and thus the turn toward Socinian belief and later association with the Unitarians, English Congregationalists also drifted in this direction: “At least half a dozen Congregational churches were to become Unitarian, when that communion was formally established,” and many congregations experienced bitter internal divisions between those sympathetic to the Unitarians and those who remained orthodox.<sup>86</sup>

“Unitarianism” as an ecclesial designation and not only a common feature of “Socinian” theology describes the communion of congregations gathered together by Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey in 1774, and which generally held to the theological principles that will be elaborated in our discussion of Priestley. This communion consisted largely of congregations previously associated with Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and other communities that had come to hold beliefs that aligned with the Unitarians, but Unitarians also formed entirely new congregations with no ties to earlier Nonconformists communities.

After 1774, one can distinguish an ecclesial body called “Unitarianism” from a tendency toward “Unitarian” thought in other religious groups, and Joseph Priestley significantly influenced the characteristic beliefs of this newly formed organized. Before expounding Priestley’s thought, I must make one last detour, this time through David Hartley’s intellectual

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<sup>85</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 37.

<sup>86</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 488.

system. The degree of detail given to Hartley's thought may appear unnecessarily extensive and is not strictly speaking necessary for an understanding of Unitarianism or Priestley. However, if Unitarianism was the religious movement that served as the main foil to Coleridge's later development, Hartley is the thinker who Coleridge early on embraced most enthusiastically and who then came to represent the erroneous character of British thought that Coleridge sought to correct. Thus, for *Coleridge's* religious milieu, Hartley proved significantly more influential than Hartley would have for many of Coleridge's contemporaries.

While Hume may have most accurately succeeded Locke methodologically by taking Locke's empirical commitments to their limits, Hartley maintained the *spirit* of Locke's original project. Locke wanted a clear description of human understanding that could undergird and facilitate continued advances in human knowledge through the Newtonian scientific method.<sup>87</sup> Hartley in turn sought a material, physiological foundation for Locke's theory of human cognition that drew upon Newton's mechanistic principles for explaining the structure of the natural world. Locke had provided a phenomenological account of the mind that did not *require* positing an immaterial soul and thus would not be incompatible with materialism,<sup>88</sup> Hartley desired to show positively *how* mind could emerge from merely corporeal substance.

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<sup>87</sup> See John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, "Epistle to the Reader," in which Locke asserts that "The commonwealth of learning is not at this time without master-builders, whose mighty designs in advancing the sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity; but every one must not hope to be a Boyle, or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters, as the great — Huygenius, and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain," and as such he sought only to be "employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge."

<sup>88</sup> Locke writes "We have the Ideas of Matter and Thinking, but shall possibly shall never be able to know, whether any mere material Being thinks or not, it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without revelation, to discover, whether Omnipotency has not given to some System of Matter fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think.," *Essay* IV.3.6.

Locke's account of association<sup>89</sup> most inspired Hartley and determined his explanation of the human mind's dependence upon and emergence from matter. Hartley believed that if he could show both the material process by which external stimuli give rise to simple sensations and a further material process by which these simple sensations became ideas, then he could explain individual flashes of consciousness. If he could explain individual instances of consciousness, he could explain consciousness *in toto*, and he would thus have a material basis for the mind as well as a natural scientific explanation of its functions. The upshot of providing such an account is that it would show that the principle laws governing the external world also govern the inner human mental world. In other words, Hartley could show that the principles of Newtonian science could really yield true knowledge in all areas of human inquiry. As Hartley affirmed "the proper method of philosophizing seems to be to discover and establish the general laws of action, affecting the subject under consideration, from certain select, well-defined, and well attested phenomena, and then explain and predict the other phenomena by these laws" – precisely "the method of analysis and synthesis recommended and followed by Sir Isaac Newton."<sup>90</sup>

Hartley appealed to a theory of vibrations to solve the problem of how matter could give rise to seemingly immaterial ideas. Like Locke, he assumed that a mind remained blank (i.e., devoid of ideas) until sensations can make impressions on it. Complex ideas form from combinations of these simple sensations and the mind discerns general principles through a process of abstraction from these sensations and ideas.<sup>91</sup> These impressions (purely physical interactions) can translate to sensations (mental states based on these interactions) because "such

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<sup>89</sup> I.e., the rules determining how the mind combines individual sense impressions into more complex ideas.

<sup>90</sup> David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations* (London: Samuel Richardson, 1749), I.6.

<sup>91</sup> Hartley, *Observations*, I.1. Sensations are the "internal feelings of the mind which arise from the impressions made by external objects upon the several parts of our body."

impressions set up vibrations in the minute particles of the medullary substances of the nerves.”<sup>92</sup> Moderate vibrations produce sensations of pleasure, while violent vibrations, which disrupt the continuity of the nerves rather than merely setting them in motion, produce pain. The nerves, set in motion, communicate the impression to the brain, and there they gradually fade away. However, because they do not fade away instantaneously, they tend toward leaving behind fainter vibrations “of a similar kind,” which Hartley called “vibratiuncles.”<sup>93</sup> Vibratiuncles correspond to Locke’s simple ideas of sensation, and Hartley used the power of association to account for how the mind organizes these simple ideas into complex ones. Whereas Locke accounted for the power of association agnostically through recourse to *some* constructive capacity in the mind, Hartley accounted for it physiologically: the patterns of association correspond to nerve functions.<sup>94</sup> This explanation accounts for all facets of human mental life and action, including passive sense experience, desire, involuntary action, and even memory.<sup>95</sup>

With the basic principles in place for this theory of mind, Hartley attempted an explanation of the whole of human mental life. As simple sensations build on each other through further experiences, they open to the possibility of higher modes of mental life. Hartley thus proposed a theory of human psychological development through time. Babies come into the world without any ideas, but as they grow and experience more and more of the world, they develop through stages where increasingly complex (and noble) concepts determine our

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<sup>92</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 218.

<sup>93</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 219.

<sup>94</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 220.

<sup>95</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 219. Hartley felt he could explain memory as well as present consciousness because certain immediate outward sensations would provide the necessary vibrations to recall past patterns; furthermore, “there are always vibrations in the brain,” independent of immediate outward impressions, “because of its heat and the pulsing of the arteries.”

pleasures and pains and thus our action. So, bare sensation eventually develops to imagination, and the combination of these two, sensation and imagination, leads to ambition. One moves in like fashion from ambition to self-interest, sympathy, theopathy, and finally the moral sense.<sup>96</sup> Each stage in human psychological development introduces a person to a broader range of possible pleasures, and this capacity for expanding the horizon of pleasures acts as the mechanism for moving from lower to higher stages. For instance, “imagination opens delights to which sensation alone cannot introduce us” by making us aware of the “beauties of the natural world, and of the charms of the world of art.”<sup>97</sup>

Hartley was not so naïve as to believe that humans do in fact move through all these stages, or that a person would necessarily act “properly” at any given stage of development. There are “degenerate,” in addition to “legitimate,” manifestations of pleasures and pains at each developmental stage. For instance, the love of God (the theopathic stage), “has its distinctive fears and pleasures” such that “when awe blends with love to create reverence, fear assumes a legitimate form.”<sup>98</sup> Atheism and superstition, on the other hand, are corrupt (but more common) forms of theopathic fear. Likewise, gratitude, confidence, and resignation are the legitimate pleasures accompanying this stage, while enthusiasm represents its degenerate form.<sup>99</sup> Hartley also freely admitted that any given action results from a motive at that moment, and that motive (a pleasure or pain) is determined by all past influences. Because this causal chain must always lead back to external causes, Hartley admitted that our larger environment and history *does*

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<sup>96</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 221.

<sup>97</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 221.

<sup>98</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 222.

<sup>99</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 222-23. It is unclear to me whether Hartley believed that these “misfires” of pleasure and pain help account for why people do not move from lower to higher forms.

determine any given action, and the totality of all the causes acting upon a person at any given time suffices to explain why a person acted how he or she did.<sup>100</sup> Hartley admit that individual immoral actions, as well as the failure of people to develop to higher stages of motivation, ultimately redounds to a failure of one's environment (or one's given physical constitution) to produce a causal nexus that would create proper motives or physiological development. Hartley also admitted that his system lead to determinism or "necessitarianism," but he would not concede that it required him to reject any notion of "free will." His work possibly opposed a specialized concept of "free will" held by a minority of philosophers, but Hartley believed himself completely consistent with the commonly held sense of the term, i.e., the ability to do what one *wants* to do or to act on one's strongest motive. Instances may arise in which one cannot act freely, but this system of necessitarianism did not in and of itself require this.<sup>101</sup>

However, critics of determinism at the time often feared not so much the abstract rejection of free will, but rather what they saw as a necessary inference from that rejection: the destruction of morality. Hartley regarded such objections as "frivolous"; far from destroying morality, his view would engender a reformist spirit. On an individual level people would strive to better their own circumstances, and on a broader scale his views would motivate initiatives for social reform. If the root cause of immoral desire or distorted motivation arose from larger environmental (social or material) conditions rather than individual choice, then modifying those larger environments held the key to broad scale moral reform. In this way, he maintained an Enlightenment optimism that humanity's failings stemmed more from ignorance and social

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<sup>100</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 225.

<sup>101</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 225. In contemporary philosophical parlance, Hartley would be a compatibilist.

conditioning than from a natural inclination toward evil, and could thus be rectified on a large scale through human effort and social engineering.

What many of Hartley's contemporaries found so strange about his thought was that he sincerely considered his beliefs compatible with a "theological superstructure" that was, if not entirely orthodox, perfectly mainstream for the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>102</sup> If we were looking at Hartley purely or primarily for his religious thought, it would probably be better to count him among the Latitudinarians rather than the radical rationalists, since he held to the need for a fully rationally defensible faith while maintaining a place for special revelation.

The perception that little in Hartley's philosophy naturally gave rise to his theological commitments let Priestley enthusiastically embrace a Hartleyan philosophy and psychology as the foundation for his more radical theological project. While Priestley and Hartley shared a common optimism about their own era and the future before them, this optimism occupied a more axiomatic position in Priestley's work. Priestley believed strongly that the continued increase in scientific knowledge would usher in a "kingdom of light" and overthrow "the reign of superstition and darkness" that had characterized so much of human history.<sup>103</sup>

To say that Priestley's primary interest lay with Hartley's philosophy does not mean he appropriated it unaltered. Priestley attempted to iron-out inconsistencies in Hartley's thought, often by drawing conclusions that Hartley stopped just shy of making. Notably, while Hartley wanted a fully material *foundation* for human consciousness, he did not reject an immaterial soul.<sup>104</sup> Priestley, however, strongly embraced the materialist possibility latent in Hartley's thought. He

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<sup>102</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 234.

<sup>103</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 230.

<sup>104</sup> One would likely say that Hartley had something like an emergent view of consciousness.

rejected the prevailing notion that matter was solid and inert and therefore incapable of the “powers of sensation and thought”; instead, matter was composed of “minute particles called atoms (akin to molecules in more modern terminology), whose essential quality was attraction and repulsion.”<sup>105</sup> By positing matter as fundamentally active, Priestley could affirm that the “sentient principle in man is always associated with the material substance of the brain.”<sup>106</sup>

Priestley thought that this thorough-going materialism solved two problems. First, it allows for the resemblance between mental processes in animals and humans without having to postulate immaterial souls for animals. Thus, the differences between human and animal mental processes was one of degree rather than kind. Second, by “eliminating the usual concept of the soul, Priestley destroyed that element in man which had been regarded as akin to the divine.”<sup>107</sup> Priestley unquestionably accepted God’s existence and the demonstrability of God’s moral attributes, but he also believed that humans necessarily cannot know God’s essential nature.<sup>108</sup> By eliminating the need for something in humans analogous to this unknowable nature, Priestley could confine the whole of human nature to the physical universe and thus extended the scope of the natural sciences to include the whole of that nature.

Priestley’s optimistic worldview and his commitment to a necessitarian materialism, as well as the intimate connection between the two, provides a good entry into his religious thought. Priestley understood the existence of God to be an unquestioned fact. He did not believe we could in principle know God’s essential nature, but we can derive knowledge that God is the world’s intelligent first cause from the symmetry and goodness found in creation. Because the

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<sup>105</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 231.

<sup>106</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 231.

<sup>107</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 232.

<sup>108</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 232.



principles of scientific observation could not determine the essential nature of God, one should not spend much time wondering about such things, to say nothing of enforcing them through dogma. Having said this, Priestley was resolute in his commitment to the complete oneness of God, meaning the rejection of any formulations of the doctrine of the Trinity. Furthermore, he rejected original sin, atonement for sin through Christ's death, predestination (seeing it as arbitrary), and the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Based on God's goodness, the unquestioned purpose for which God had created humanity was unlimited happiness. Necessitarianism ensured that this original purpose would inevitably come about; materialism assured that natural science could eliminate the ignorance and superstition that still impeded its realization.

Priestley attempted no self-conscious rejection of Christianity; to the contrary, he believed that he could and must preserve Christianity by stripping it of its "corruptions." In his passionate desire to see Christianity reformed according to the principles of scientific rationality, i.e., in "enlightening" the gospel (although maybe Cragg is more correct to call his project a "gospel of enlightenment"), he pursued his task with "something akin to evangelical exaltation."<sup>109</sup> The desire to understand the whole of created reality according to the principles of scientific rationality provided the motivation that unified all his fields of inquiry. Here one must proceed cautiously when evaluating the centrality or superfluity of Priestley's religious convictions. One may plausibly assume that were he alive 50 years later, he would not have felt any obligation to enlist this unified scientific inquiry in the service of a grand theological vision. However, for the Priestley who actually lived, neglecting this central religious motivation would fundamentally distort the shape of his intellectual work. As with Newton, Bacon, and other pioneers of modern experimental science, Priestley's grounding concern and motive was

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<sup>109</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 233.

theological.<sup>110</sup> Granted, the theology he arrived at involved a total conformity to human rationality, but it was a theological concern nonetheless. Priestley had, as he explains in his memoirs, grown up in a moderate home, and it seems one at least amenable to the teachings and practices of the evangelical revival.<sup>111</sup> As was the case with many other Presbyterians at the time, he moved from the Calvinism of his youth to Arminianism, to Arianism, and finally to Socinianism. It was principally his Socinian theology that drew him to materialism and necessitarianism, and not the other way around.<sup>112</sup>

Unlike the Deists, Priestley did not set out to discover pure natural religion independently of Scripture and only then accept whatever Scripture accorded with natural religion. Rather, he saw himself as completing the Reformation by returning to the original Christianity taught by Scripture. However, while Priestley might have felt he maintained the spirit of the Reformation, he certainly rejected many of its teachings. The Reformers, in his mind, remained inconsistent in

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<sup>110</sup> Margaret C. Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 74-5.

<sup>111</sup> Priestley speaks of his father having been “very fond of Mr. Whitfield's writings, and other works of a similar kind, having been brought up in the principles of Calvinism, and adopting them, but without ever giving much attention to matters of speculation” (Priestley, *Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, to the Year 1795, written by himself*, [London: J. Johnson, 1806], I, 5). He goes on to describe “having read many books of *experiences*, and, in consequence, believing that a *new birth*, produced by the immediate agency of the Spirit of God, was necessary to salvation, and not being able to satisfy myself that I had experienced any thing of the kind, I felt occasionally such distress of mind as it is not in my power to describe, and which I still look back upon with horror” (Priestley, *Memoirs*, I, 7). There was, then, a very strong *emotional* impetuosity for his turn toward rational religion; he felt overwhelmingly the unbearable burden of experiencing the New Birth despite his best efforts and of furthermore feeling liberated upon embracing rationalist theology. Priestley may then have been more affected by the evangelical revival than he would have cared to admit; while he rejected their theology, he seems to have maintained their rhetoric. While replacing bondage to the unbearable weight of sin and liberation by grace with bondage to ignorance and liberation by reason, Priestley *is* nevertheless giving a conversion testimony. What is very interesting here is that the logic of Coleridge's eventual critique of Wesleyan Arminianism in favor of moderate Calvinism is at root the same as Priestley's, except that the schools of thought are reversed. For Coleridge, the inability to truly feel he lived up to the exacting moral demands of Arminianism was an unbearable cruelty relieved by the embrace of the utterly unearned salvific grace affirmed offered by the doctrine of Predestination.

<sup>112</sup> There is still good reason to believe that a general spirit of the liberating hope brought about by an Enlightenment spirit and trust in human rationality probably played some substantial role in inclining Priestley toward ever more rationalist forms of theology.

truly applying the principle of *Sola Scriptura* and thus developed systems of belief that retained far too many “corruptions.” At the same time, Priestley attempted to consistently and rigorously apply scientific principles in distinguishing between true, original Christianity and its corruptions. Through the scientific study of history, Priestley believed he could discover when and from where these corruptions had been introduced. By demonstrating the *un-Scriptural* origin of these doctrines, Priestley believed it possible to then excise them from true Christianity.

Priestley’s Unitarianism seems unquestionably to have continued the tradition of a radically rationalist form of Christianity and thus was a kind of successor to Deism. He shared the general Deist optimism that human reason could conquer ignorance and superstition. The acceptance of natural science as the principal model for proper rational inquiry meant that Priestley left slightly more room for “mystery” in the very weak sense that one cannot in principle know the nature of God, but his embrace of a complete materialism (excepting God) meant that in the universe the in-principle unknowable must give way to that which science had not yet discovered. However, this difference appears insignificant enough that it should not constitute an ideological shift from Deism in any significant way: God’s essential nature cannot be known by humans, but Priestley’s conclusion from this was that God’s essential nature therefore makes no difference on how we live or act.

Nevertheless, one should not fail to see the real differences between Priestly and the Deists. While he may have ended up with a list of beliefs that could have satisfied a Deist, how he claimed to have arrived at them is a different matter. Scripture had to be amenable to scientific investigation, but Priestley still believed that it, or at least the original Christianity that Scripture points to, determined true Christianity.<sup>113</sup> This contrasts with the Deist insistence on

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<sup>113</sup> Now, one may contend that it is almost too convenient that Priestley ends up with a doctrinal system derived from Scripture that looks almost identical to what some Deists would have affirmed, and that this calls raises the

deriving all the truths of religion from rational inquiry alone and only then, without any sense of compulsion to do so, demonstrating that Scripture conformed in some ways to these truths. Furthermore, whereas the Deists had lauded the Greeks and Romans and denigrated Judaism for its dedication to ritualism, ignorance, and devotion to a cruel God, Priestley's esteem and corresponding contempt went in the opposite direction. Priestley still held Judaism had a certain "proneness to idolatry", but it was Judaism that had the extraordinarily high purpose of "impressing the minds of many persons of other nations" of its *fundamental* truth, namely, the complete unity of God.<sup>114</sup> It was *Jewish* Christianity that represented the earliest, un-corrupted form of the religion.<sup>115</sup> In contrast, Greco-Roman philosophy fares very poorly. It was through the introduction of "maxims of pagan philosophy" that Christianity began to adhere to corrupt doctrines such as the divinity of Christ and the Trinity, and this "proceeded afterwards until Christianity was brought to a state little better than paganism."<sup>116</sup> Far from providing the model for opposition to superstition and ignorance as the Deists maintained, Greco-Roman philosophy was the chief corrupter of true Christianity and source of its superstitious doctrines.

Deists and Unitarians represent an extreme pole of rationalist Christianity/religion, but were not the only ones deserving of this title. There were also thinkers who acted as apologists for more traditional formulations of Christian doctrine but nonetheless still deployed a

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spectre that Priestley determined which doctrines needed to be removed because these did not conform with reason and only then sought justifications for their "unscriptural" status. While this may be the case, it still does not detract from the fact that Priestley still felt the need to appeal to the authority of Scripture, while most Deists did not.

<sup>114</sup> Priestley, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, pt. I, 6.

<sup>115</sup> Priestley, *Corruptions*, I, 8.

<sup>116</sup> Priestley, *Corruptions*, I, 10.

fundamentally “rationalist” approach to Christianity. Bishop Butler at the beginning of the century and William Paley at the end prove fitting exemplars for this “apologetic” rationalism.<sup>117</sup>

Interestingly, this apologetic strand of thinking arose largely against the most extreme forms of rationalist religion, and it often acted as its most dedicated opponent. Butler may have done more than any other figure to repudiate Deism publicly; Paley used his evidential approach to both natural and revealed theology as a means of defending against the atheism and doubt occasioned by either the natural sciences or Humean rational skepticism. But, to use one of Coleridge’s favorite maxims, opposites meet. The apologists emphasized that a truly rational approach to Christianity embraced special revelation and the unknown, but this acceptance did not necessarily imply a qualitatively different understanding of the form of religious knowledge. Though their positions on the matter of individual doctrines would have placed Butler among conservatives and Paley on the liberal side of latitudinarianism, the apologists’s methodological disposition most resembled that of those whose thinking they most vociferously opposed.

Joseph Butler, the earlier of our two apologists, was probably the more theologically orthodox and was certainly the more circumscribed in his claims about the reach of human reason. Actually, much of Butler’s argument from analogy against the Deists was that they tried to give reason an unsustainable capacity to know the natural world; precisely this over-reaching led to the Deists’ over-confident dismissals of revealed religion.

Although born the son of a “Presbyterian linen draper” and taught at Samuel Jones’s dissenting Academy, Butler found himself drawn toward the established church and, after attending Oriel College, Oxford, he became famous as a preacher at Rolls Chapel.<sup>118</sup> At Rolls he

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<sup>117</sup> Paley is of particular interest because Coleridge explicitly targets this style of theology for refutation in *Aids to Reflection*.

<sup>118</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 280.

wrote his famous 1736 defense of Christianity against Deism, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*. He first became Bishop of the See of Bristol and then again returned to an episcopal appointment in Durham in 1750. In terms of his character, Butler had a reputation for being prudent and yet still “almost prodigal in the generosity of his charities,” a man of great devotion, and a fine and well-respected preacher.<sup>119</sup>

Deism no longer represented a serious intellectual force in Britain by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Butler’s *Analogy of Religion* was likely the most important single work for dismantling the Deist reputation in the public eye.<sup>120</sup> This work proved so influential that most contemporary students only become familiar with his thought through it, and this it secured his enduring reputation as an apologist. As the title suggests, Butler used an analogical method to argue for the probability of Christianity’s revealed truths by moving analogically from human knowledge about the natural world gained through rational inquiry to deeper metaphysical questions such as the nature of God and the need for special divine revelation.

While Butler never explicitly singled-out Deism as his target, he also made no attempt to hide his intellectual opponents or the purpose of his arguments. He almost certainly took issue with the intellectual challenge to the truth claims that traditionally Christianity understood as coming through special revelation, but the *attitude* with which his unnamed opponents dismissed these claims appears to have troubled Butler much more. Butler could accept serious debate about these issues among the intelligentsia, but he felt instead that the Deists took the falsehood of Christianity’s claims for granted and made them therefore only the subject of “mirth and

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<sup>119</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 281; 285.

<sup>120</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 112.

ridicule.”<sup>121</sup> This lack of due reverence in their treatment of Christianity’s claims contributed in no small part to Butler taking aim specifically at the Deists. As Terrence Penelhum summarizes, Butler meant to rectify both the arguments against Christianity as well as the glib dismissal with which the Deists made those arguments:

Butler’s arguments are intended as an antidote to the frivolity with which he thought his contemporaries chose to approach the claims of Christianity. He intends to attack it by showing it to be unreasonable and imprudent. To show it is *imprudent*, he does not have to prove that Christianity is true, or even prove that it is likely Christianity is true; he has only to show that *it is not so clear a case that there is nothing in it*.<sup>122</sup>

Butler understood rational demonstration in terms of probability, and it was in this spirit that he believed that his argument would show that it is more reasonable to believe in the truth of Christianity as a revealed religion than not to believe. But even if his arguments for the probability of Christianity failed, he still thought he could fall back on prudence to secure the rationality of belief. If there is even the slimmest chance it could be true (i.e., shy of Christian belief implying an unavoidable logical contradiction), one should believe in traditional Christianity because the stakes are so incommensurately high; one loses little by belief compared with what one stands to lose through unbelief if even this slim possibility proves true.<sup>123</sup>

Butler nevertheless thought that he made the case that our knowledge of the world makes the truth of Christianity as a revealed religion more probable than its falsehood. Beginning with the claim that if one truly accepted the idea that we should move by analogy from knowledge of nature to assertions about God, Butler concluded that no one should actually arrive at the Deists’

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<sup>121</sup> Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (London, 1736), “Advertisement.”

<sup>122</sup> Terrence Penelhum, *Butler: Arguments of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1985), 67.

<sup>123</sup> Penelhum, *Butler*, 67. In this way Butler establishes a rather low threshold that he believes he must pass to demonstrate the superior practically rational (if one can conceive of prudence in such a way) grounds for Christian belief. This part of his argument resembles Pascal’s famous wager, although Butler gave Christianity an even lower threshold that had to be met. While Pascal framed belief and unbelief as holding roughly equal probability, Butler’s argument allows for the prudential acceptance of Christian belief even if it were highly unlikely to be true.

proposed natural religion of simple truths fully transparent to human reason. The New Science indicated “a nature vast beyond all possible imagination,” and Butler believed that, far from being fully known or even knowable, nature in reality presents humans with a world at least as mysterious as it is comprehensible.<sup>124</sup> If one could not arrive at clear and unambiguous knowledge of the immanent world, then should not humans assume that the transcendent source of that world would likewise exist beyond human comprehension, and likely all that much more?

Accepting that even natural knowledge requires room for mystery let Butler reintroduce what the Deists found truly unpalatable about Christianity: the potential for special revelation. If the natural world presents the observer with mystery and obscurity, of which some is likely an inherent part of that world, then one should reasonably expect “to find similar perplexities in religion – in natural as well as in revealed religion.”<sup>125</sup> Butler always wanted to avoid any hubris regarding human rational capabilities. This arrogance he saw as his opponents’s undoing, and nowhere is that more evident than when he moves to a defense of revealed religion. Butler also wanted to ensure that his conception of revelation did not require acceptance of logical contradictions. While it could provide truths that were incomprehensible or even previously unknowable, “Revelation cannot contradict Natural Religion.”<sup>126</sup> Butler also conceded that in an ideal state revealed religion would prove superfluous; Christianity was indeed merely a republication of “natural or essential religion.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ernest Campbell Mossner, *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason* (New York: MacMillan, 1936), 93.

<sup>125</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 118.

<sup>126</sup> Mossner, *Bishop Butler*, 93.

<sup>127</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 118. Nonetheless, “human iniquity and vice have so far obscured man’s native understanding that natural religion is insufficient.” Against those who would not have counted themselves Deists, but who would have so minimized the truly revelatory elements of Christian revelation, Butler asserted that Christian revelation “provides essential information that could not have been obtained any other way.”



He always used caution in making his claims, but Butler did think that the natural order makes special revelation probable and not merely plausible. Additionally, he took up many of the challenges put forward by the Deists against Christianity to show that they relied on faulty conceptions of the natural world just as faulty assumptions led to the Deist understanding of natural religion. For instance, the Deists often attacked Christianity because of its perceived inequity: Christianity required assent to the non-egalitarian belief that revelation “had not been given equally to all men, in all places and at all times.”<sup>128</sup> But how, Butler asked, could anyone derive an ideal of uniformity and equality from a truly objective assessment of the natural world? The diversity of human material conditions and natural endowments should, if anything, demonstrate that “diversity, not uniformity, is the rule of life.”<sup>129</sup> By Deism’s own methods, this observation should lead one to expect – not rule out – an unequal distribution of religious truth.

Several important points should be noted for a fair assessment of Butler’s arguments. He assumed both the existence of God and the only probabilistic nature of human rationality that resulted from human finitude. He rejected a Cartesian view of rationality whereby a human being could deduce with apodictic certainty truths about God and the world; showing the probability of some truth was the most that could be hoped for. For him, to know the laws of the universe completely “would enable us to understand the past, present, and future with a systematic certainty that God already possesses,” but God has not endowed us with this capacity because it would be unnecessary for our conducting our lives in this finite existence.<sup>130</sup> With this probabilistic approach to human knowledge, Butler showed himself, when compared to Browne

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<sup>128</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 122.

<sup>129</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 122.

<sup>130</sup> Penehlum, *Butler*, 68.

and Berkeley (the other great intellectual opponents of Deism), to be the most common-sense, the most skeptical, and the most scientifically oriented of the bunch.<sup>131</sup> One need not chalk this up to any particularly pious motivation, though. In arguing for a probabilistic and circumscribed view of human rationality, as well as his focus on the need to move analogically from observation of the natural world to God, Butler was operating to a great degree in fidelity to the model of rationality popularized by Locke and the proponents of the New Science.

In terms of intellectual disposition, Butler has many characteristics that clearly differentiated him from the temperament and style of his Deist opponents. Whereas the Deists regularly resorted to *ad hominem* attacks and personal mockery, Butler did all that he could to refrain from invoking particular works, names, or even schools, and instead sought to meet particular arguments. In a similar vein, while part of the Deists' undoing was a tendency toward arrogance and overstatement, Butler defended his positions with the most circumscribed solutions and with a style whereby "he never moved forward without fully consolidating his most recent advance and preparing carefully for the next."<sup>132</sup> Finally, if the Deists saw no problem in demolishing straw men, Butler's very approach seems to belie a kind of intellectual charity and good-sportsmanship: Butler always tried to begin from commonly held positions and to argue toward what he saw as the natural consequences of those positions while pointing to what he saw as the illegitimate inferences that led to his opponents divergent conclusions.<sup>133</sup>

Despite positioning himself most strongly against the Deists, Butler still exhibits a significantly overlapping methodological outlook with them. Like the Deists, Butler asserted that

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<sup>131</sup> Mossner, *Bishop Butler*, 82.

<sup>132</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 114.

<sup>133</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 114.

the court of human reason ultimately had jurisdiction over all religious conviction. He differed on what specific propositions one can rationally justify by making greater space for more orthodox Christian beliefs, but Butler still agreed with the Deists' view that religious truth is primarily a matter of establishing and affirming correct propositions.

Butler (like Paley, as will we will see) nevertheless moved beyond the confines of a *merely* rationalist religious outlook. The main reason one might strongly resist classing Butler as a purely "rationalist" (if orthodox) religious thinker is that while he believed that Christianity does ultimately conform best to human reason, he would still argue for Christian belief on the grounds of prudence even if he could not actually defend its rational probability. However, from the perspective of locating Coleridge among the theological landscape of 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain, the point would be irrelevant because Coleridge distanced himself not only from those who made religious knowledge primarily a matter of rationally deducible propositions, but also those who argued for Christianity principally or wholly on the grounds of self-interest.

The cause of Christian apologetics found its most famous 18<sup>th</sup> century advocate in William Paley, born nearly a decade after Butler's refutation of Deism. Paley's thought displays a shift in outlook and tone among the defenders of mainstream (if not fully *orthodox*) theology that mirrored a similar shift in the transition from Deism to Unitarianism. Paley, who rigorously sought a rational demonstration of the existence of God and of the particular claims of Christianity based not only on the model of rationality asserted by the scientific method, but also on the specific knowledge of the natural world gained through advances in those disciplines, provided writings that remained required reading in British (and American) universities well into

the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>134</sup> His thought most represented, if it did not fully codify, the emerging style of university theology that would predominate in early 19<sup>th</sup> century England, and it also sufficiently influenced the larger intellectual landscape to provide theological justification for the existence of medical faculties at universities. While Paley himself likely opposed neither mystery nor personal piety, he quickly came to represent both the “arid rationalism” of the Enlightenment and a mechanistic worldview made obsolete with Darwin’s 1859 *Origin of Species*.

William Paley, born the July of 1747 in Peterborough, came from a “thrifty and parsimonious” clerical household, and, potentially owing to sickliness and a lack of coordination in childhood, developed a sharp wit to accompany his enviable intellectual talent.<sup>135</sup> Paley entered Christ’s College, Cambridge in 1759 where he proved himself a talented mathematician. Paley received a fellowship at Christ’s and became “one of Cambridge’s great teachers.”<sup>136</sup> He also became a priest in the Church of England, leaving the university to serve the parish at Westmoreland in 1776.<sup>137</sup> Here Paley wrote his three volumes in which he attempted to demonstrate empirically the truth of Christianity, the historical veracity of the Bible, and natural religion, as well as an influential work on ethics, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*. While his contemporaries respected his work, and those who worked with him held

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<sup>134</sup> And some of his work continued to be used well beyond this time. His *Evidences* was still part of the Cambridge examination syllabus until 1920, when it was finally dropped. M. L. Clarke, *Paley: Evidences for the Man* (London: S.P.C.K, 1974), 129.

<sup>135</sup> D.L. LeMahieu, *The Mind of William Paley* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 2-3.

<sup>136</sup> LeMahieu, *Mind of Paley*, 10.

<sup>137</sup> Matthew D. Eddy and David Knight, Introduction to *Natural Theology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), xiv. This was in no small part because Paley wanted to marry Jane Hewitt in 1776, and vicars, unlike College Fellows, could marry.

him in high esteem, Paley, unlike Butler, did not rise to higher ecclesial office, in part because some authorities perceived him as a crypto-Arian or Socinian.<sup>138</sup>

Present familiarity with Paley comes mainly from his championing of the argument from design using evidence from the discoveries of the 18<sup>th</sup> century natural sciences, and specifically for his analogy of the watch and the watchmaker. This argument is contained in Paley's *Natural Theology*, but this was the last of a kind of three-part defense of both natural religion and the particular claims of Christianity as a revealed religion. Prior to *Natural Theology*, he published his *Evidences of Christianity*, in which he wanted to claim not only that Christianity republished natural religion, but also that Christianity, through special revelation, confirmed and reinforced the claims of natural religion by adding an "assurance of a future state after death."<sup>139</sup> Paley believed he could demonstrate that Scripture was God's Word because of "the miracles which accompanied it."<sup>140</sup> Accepting the existence of God, one must at least hold that this God could "vary the natural order" for particular purposes in ways that would be repeated and become part of universal or common human experience. Holding this supposition, Paley argued that Scripture reported the actual occurrence of such theoretically possible miracles and that other purported accounts of miraculous activity do not provide strong enough evidence to compel belief (affirming both the positive truth and uniqueness of the Christian revelation).<sup>141</sup>

Paley moved from the abstract possibility of divine miraculous activity to the reality of miracles by appealing to his understanding of the conditions under which the witnesses recorded

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<sup>138</sup> Eddy and Knight, Introduction, xiv. Paley probably did not hold to any substantially heterodox beliefs and even opposed loosening subscription requirements, but his emphasizing the rationality of Christian doctrine and his association with more liberal thinkers led some to suspect the authenticity of Paley's claims to orthodoxy.

<sup>139</sup> Clarke, *Paley*, 100.

<sup>140</sup> Clarke, *Paley*, 100.

<sup>141</sup> Clarke, *Paley*, 102.

in the New Testament had given their accounts. Paley held that if a number of people, independent of each other, should continue to testify to the same experience despite knowing that such testimony would likely result in death or torture and that acknowledging the falsehood of that testimony would prevent these outcomes, then “there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe [the witnesses].”<sup>142</sup> The New Testament, he believed, provides a reliable and accurate account of people making testimonies under just these conditions.<sup>143</sup> Paley could not, for the sake of his argument for the singular truth of Christian revelation and against Hume’s attack on miracles, stop at arguing for the truthfulness of the New Testament’s miracle stories. He also had to make case that other claims about miraculous activity, especially those that supported a divine revelation at odds with the claims of (Protestant) Christianity, did not meet the same criteria that established the truth of the New Testament accounts.<sup>144</sup>

Paley fully committed himself to arguing for the rationality of Christianity’s revealed truths, but most people know him from his work in natural theology.<sup>145</sup> Natural theology dates to pre-Christian Greek and Roman philosophy and had many a Christian and Jewish proponent prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A distinction that developed in some forms of 18<sup>th</sup> century British natural theology, with Paley acting as its most famous advocate, was an understanding of

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<sup>142</sup> William Paley, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* (London, 1794), “Introductory Considerations.”

<sup>143</sup> Clarke, *Paley*, 104. Paley drew heavily upon an expansive, 17 volume 1727 work by Nathaniel Lardner, the *Credibility of the Gospel History*, which collected and set out the evidences for the New Testament as a reliable and accurate account of the original testimony, and trials, of the original apostles. He certainly had good reason to fall back on Lardner, who was “compulsively thorough” (*Mind of Paley*, 104).

<sup>144</sup> Clarke, *Paley*, 105.

<sup>145</sup> I.e., Those things that can be known about God through human reason independently of any special revelation. Various thinkers had higher or lower estimations of what precisely could be known through human reason, but proponents generally argue that they included God’s existence and moral attributes (God’s goodness, wisdom, etc.).

“human reason” that followed the conception of rationality propounded by adherents to the New Science that merged Newtonian scientific method and Lockean empiricism.

The most famous part of Paley’s *Natural Theology*, and the part most familiar to contemporary readers, is Paley’s “Watchmaker” analogy. He argued that, should one find a watch while walking through a heath, the watch’s complexity and apparent intentionality of design should lead one to believe that some intelligent and intentional creator, rather than the confluence of random, unthinking natural causes, produced the watch. If the world also exhibits intentional complexity and design, then one should draw the conclusion that some purposive, intelligent designer more likely than not also produced the world itself. The remainder of the first half of the work drew widely from the then-differentiating natural sciences, specifically chemistry, astronomy, and, above all, anatomy, to point to well-ordered design in the natural world.<sup>146</sup> Paley dedicated the second half of *Natural Theology* to working from the effects (design) in the world to the nature of the cause (designer). Paley stands broadly within the post-Lockean British tradition of metaphysical skepticism, assuming it is “impossible to describe [God] with complete precision,” but still holding that “some things about [God’s] personality were clear” from the design exhibited in creation.<sup>147</sup> Being a designer implied intelligence, which in turn implied mind. Paley would go on to enumerate a number of other attributes such as God’s self-sufficiency, self-sustenance, being the First Cause of the world, unity in the form of utter self-consistency, and complete goodness.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Eddy and Knight, Introduction, xix.

<sup>147</sup> LeMahieu, *Mind of Paley*, 81.

<sup>148</sup> LeMahieu, *Mind of Paley*, 81-82.

Paley's commitment to this kind of apologetic resembled, and at times went beyond, Butler's approach. Both thinkers defended Christianity in its natural and revealed dimensions against challenges from skeptics and more radical religious thinkers. Both also tried to demonstrate that the rational defense of Christianity proved more intellectually tenable than the challenges leveled against it. However, while one should not underplay the diversity within late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century Deism, Paley faced a more diverse cadre of intellectual opponents than had Butler. *Evidences of Christianity* defended the authenticity and historical accuracy of the New Testament writings against attacks from early proponents of a "scientific" approach to history, and Paley took aim specifically at Edmund Gibbon and his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.<sup>149</sup> In his defense of miracles and in his arguments for the human capacity to know God through empirical study of the natural world, Paley challenged David Hume's skepticism. Finally, while Paley would not have viewed scientifically motivated religious doubt as a *primary* challenger, and he certainly saw the New Science as allied with the Christian search for truth, he *did* list the threat of atheism as one of the reasons for writing his natural theology. Even if he remained methodologically a man of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Paley could sense the growing sentiment that the natural sciences could make discoveries that challenged traditional Christian claims as much as they could be marshalled in its support.<sup>150</sup>

Despite a contemporary trend that sees Paley's rationalist apologetic as an attempt to convince unbelievers, he may not have actually deviated substantially from John Henry Newman's sentiment regarding evidential theology, namely that "evidences" were only helpful

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<sup>149</sup> Eddy and Knight, Introduction, xvi.

<sup>150</sup> Clarke notes that "a reviewer of Paley's *Natural Theology* observed that unlike previous writers he considered and answered the objections of atheistically writers" (Clarke, 94).



insofar as they alleviate the anxious doubts of those already possessing faith.<sup>151</sup> However, what Paley actually believed or the shape of his work viewed in its totality concerns us less than how Coleridge perceived Paley's theology. And here we find Coleridge explicitly identifying Paley as an arch-advocate of an arid rationalist and evidentialist approach to theology that might just as well "lead the inquirer out of religion rather than into it."<sup>152</sup> Part of Coleridge's motivation for writing *Aids to Reflection* was to repudiate what he saw as this kind of disinterested, rationalist (with "reason" wrongly conceived as he saw it) theology that led to an equally non-Christian, self-interested moralism. Now, one should still have a firm grasp on the theological traditions that Coleridge rejected, but this rejection means that one can also safely assume that one should not locate Coleridge within this school of late 18<sup>th</sup> century British theology.

I now turn to the primary non-Evangelical, theological divisions in the Church of England.<sup>153</sup> Particularly by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, three major divisions came to be described by contemporaries within the Church of England: the Latitudinarian (or liberal), the High Church (or non-Evangelical Orthodox), and the Evangelical.<sup>154</sup> This division is in many ways an oversimplification, largely because 18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>151</sup> Were this an attempt at fully describing 18<sup>th</sup> century theology, I would devote more time to the complex relationship between Paley's understanding of piety and the ability of human beings to rationally demonstrate the natural and revealed truths of Christianity. Paley himself lamented a "coldness of devotion" present in the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century church, and he had an abiding sense of human corruption (LeMahieu, 22). For Newman's views on the potential value of evidences, see John Henry Cardinal Newman, "Sermon X Will and Reason Contrasted as Habits of Mind," in *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 199-200.

<sup>152</sup> John Beer, Editor's Introduction in *Aids to Reflection*, lxviii.

<sup>153</sup> As I indicated earlier in this chapter, the requirement of subscription and the institutional checks and balances of the Church of England tended to drive out more radical forms of theology (be they rationalist or enthusiast), so it makes sense to talk about the Church of England as its own theological spectrum.

<sup>154</sup> John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, "Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the 'long' eighteenth century," in *The Church of England c. 1688 - c. 1833*, eds. John Walsh et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 45. Walsh and Taylor only identify the three types of discernable churchmanship/schools of theological thought; I make the further differentiation, although Walsh and Taylor at multiple points seem to see Latitudinarian and liberal as synonymous, using them almost interchangeably (there is a similar relationship between "low church"

authors did not apply these terms consistently and their meanings and scopes could shift as the century unfolded. I nevertheless still find these terms a helpful heuristic, so I will make sure to distinguish the various ways in which they were used and to focus on how they help to differentiate specifically theological schools in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglicanism.

“Liberal” Anglicanism certainly included some full-blown Arians and Socinians; however, those with such beliefs could not have held them officially and would have had to have espoused them with some degree of obfuscation because membership in the Church, and particularly ordination, officially required subscription to the 39 Articles of Religion.<sup>155</sup> By far the more pervasive strand of liberalism within the Church of England during this time would be that of Latitudinarianism, a theological temperament and tradition that (1) emphasized the fundamentally rational basis of religion; (2) strove for greater religious toleration, a more expansive interpretation of Christian orthodoxy, and a reduced emphasis on the mysterious and ceremonial; and (3) put an emphasis on the end of religion as morality.

Latitudinarianism is a broad category, but not so broad as to exclude it from describing a distinctive set of theological and political tendencies, and part of its breadth owes to the pervasive influence it exercised within the Church of England from the late 17<sup>th</sup> through to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Indeed, what began as a minority movement in the 1660s and 1670s became “the position linking the chief office holders in the church together” only 60 years

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and Latitudinarian, although these terms are not as necessarily interchangeable). See also Nockles, “Church Parties in the Pre-Tractarian Church of England 1750-1833,” in *The Church of England c. 1688 - c. 1833*, eds. John Walsh et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 334-59.

<sup>155</sup> Although, and this will be discussed at somewhat greater length below, there were several ways in which one could “subscribe” without holding to what they seemed to imply, ranging from outright dishonesty to complex (and sometimes convoluted) interpretive schema.

later.<sup>156</sup> As early as the 1690s, Latitudinarians had become “the dominant, though not the majority, party in the Church of England.”<sup>157</sup>

The circumstances and figures surrounding the beginning of the movement help to clarify and disentangle the intertwined theological and political characteristics of the Latitudinarians. As stated above, the English Civil War, Interregnum, and Restoration greatly shaped the religious character and theological tenor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Latitudinarianism is no different, and indeed one may go so far as to say that it represented *the* characteristic theological response to these forces. The first references to “latitude-men,” the exonym<sup>158</sup> from which we get “latitudinarian,” came from the mid-1650s and 1660s. This term described those thinkers who “in terms of doctrine wanted to reduce the Christian religion to a few plain essentially moral fundamentals, easily apprehended and put into practice by the ordinary rational man,” and who also “found no difficulty in both holding office during the Interregnum, when the Church of England was under attack, and conforming to the Church in 1662, when its position was secured and defined by Act of Parliament.”<sup>159</sup> The theo-political vision of Latitudinarianism’s first two generations arose from an attempt at reconciling what could be seen as *prima face* dissonant desiderata. On the one hand, there was a strong impulse to blame the violence of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century on the “enthusiasm” of the Puritans.<sup>160</sup> On the other hand, though many of these thinkers saw a

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<sup>156</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 34.

<sup>157</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 26.

<sup>158</sup> As with terms like “Methodist” or “Puritan” or so many other epithets that have come to define specific movements, such nomenclature was originally derisive.

<sup>159</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 25-6.

<sup>160</sup> Specifically, it was the Puritan attachment to a Calvinist-Augustinian vision of God and the more general problem that this vision relied, in the eyes of the latitude-men, upon ultimate adherence to norms that could not be adjudicated by human reason.

potential for a socially and politically stabilizing effect in the reestablished Church and restored monarchy, they were often positively disposed to individual Nonconformists or to various moderate dissenting groups; thus, they resisted the Restoration Church's seemingly vindictive disposition. Therefore, both the Cromwellian restrictions on episcopal and High Church elements in the Church of England as well as the ensuing counter-restrictions upon those who favored less episcopal or Erastian polities sat poorly with this group.

Scholars sometimes associate the first Latitudinarians with the Cambridge Platonists, particularly Whichcote, More, Smith, and Cudworth, such that the two groups seem identical, but influential early Latitudinarians also came from outside the bounds of "Cambridge Platonism." For instance, John Wilkins, a highly influential first-generation member of the movement, was not at Cambridge.<sup>161</sup> Cambridge *did* become vital for popularizing Latitudinarian ideas among the English clergy in the 1670s, 80s, and 90s, but individuals outside the "Platonist" circle shared in that responsibility.<sup>162</sup> The "Cambridge Platonists," exerted significant influence on some important second-generation Latitudinarians, including Simon Patrick and John Tillotson. However, other central figures in the development and perpetuation of this movement, such as John Locke and Samuel Clarke, were certainly not "Platonists."<sup>163</sup>

Regardless of how one divides up the schools from which this movement developed, it would become *the* most powerful group in in the Church of England under William III. This ascendancy was helped in large part by the Non-Juror's refusal to submit to William's authority, which weakened the High Church party and in turn left open a number of important ecclesial

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<sup>161</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, Sentiment*, 28.

<sup>162</sup> Walsh and Taylor, "Anglican Church," 37.

<sup>163</sup> Some thinkers who provided influential in Latitudinarian thought should not necessarily be thought of as early Latitudinarians, with John Locke being one of the most famous examples.

appointments.<sup>164</sup> Thus, “in 1691 Tillotson was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, Patrick was appointed to Ely, Fowler to Gloucester, and like-minded men to other sees.”<sup>165</sup> These positions of great influence, combined with the particular propensity for the Latitudinarians to disseminate their ideas widely, helped to make a Latitudinarian sensibility one of the most important, if not the dominant, Anglican intellectual mood in the first three-quarters of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Latitudinarians held their theology and ecclesiology/political thought closely together, but one can distinguish the two for analysis and it will be helpful to look first to their intellectual commitments. A commitment to the thorough-going need for a rationally defensible Christianity united nearly all Latitudinarians. Unlike the radical rationalist theological traditions, Latitudinarians did not oppose special revelation and had far fewer problems with miracles, prophecy, the divinity of Christ, the human need for grace, special revelation, or faith in what goes beyond reason – so long as these things were properly understood. They did reject any interpretations of these orthodox convictions that appeared to contradict reason. However, rather than holding “that nothing is to be believed that cannot be apprehended by reason,” they accepted that “we must be convinced by our reason to believe what is beyond our reason.”<sup>166</sup> The Latitudinarians attempted a conciliatory view of the relationship between reason and faith: They sought to “unite faith and reason, religion and philosophy, revealed and natural religion.”<sup>167</sup> However, an unforeseen consequence that emerged as the movement developed was a tendency

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<sup>164</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 33

<sup>165</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 33.

<sup>166</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 65. Depending on how one chooses to see the causal connection, this either led to or sprang from a commitment to “anti-Enthusiasm,” or the conviction that Christianity could expect belief in things that were in their mind arbitrary or contrary to reason. It also was associated with their belief that “despite the effects of sin,” a human being remains “a rational being endowed with innate knowledge of God, good and evil, and moral duties” (Rivers, 59-60).

<sup>167</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 66.

to “reduce the meaning of faith to an epistemological question and to restrict the role of reason in its association with faith to the task of proving the Scriptures true and worthy of assent.”<sup>168</sup>

Most Latitudinarians saw themselves as advancing orthodox Christianity, but the way in which traditional doctrines were emphasized, interpreted, or, in some case, both, distinguished their approach to orthodoxy. Latitudinarians wanted to differentiate between those doctrines that required a narrow interpretation and those that were *adiaphora* and need not have settled interpretations. Proper interpretations of the Trinity tended to fall into the latter category. One may rightly say that “all of the Latitudinarians were Trinitarians,” and some even wrote lengthy defenses of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>169</sup> Such defenses proved exceptional, however, and some Latitudinarians likely had interpretations of the Trinity considered heterodox at the time (such as those of the Arians), with a few even going so far as to place the doctrine itself “among the *adiaphora* of non-essential truths.”<sup>170</sup> The charge of Socinianism so often leveled against Latitudinarians by their opponent may be unfair, since Socinians regularly found themselves the targets of Latitudinarian polemic. However, this accusation reveals the degree to which Latitudinarians refrained from discussions of this doctrine relative to their orthodox peers.

Latitudinarians also frequently left the specifics of Christology and the atonement among the *adiaphora*. They had “little to say about the Incarnation” and “almost nothing about Christ as Mediator.”<sup>171</sup> It is this point, particularly the nature of justification by faith, that most

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<sup>168</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 66. One sees this tendency in Paley, who represents in many ways the last significant Latitudinarian theologian and its intellectual figurehead as the movement entered the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>169</sup> John Marshall, “John Locke and latitudinarianism,” in *Philosophy, Science, and Religion 1640-1700*, eds. Richard Kroll, et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 270.

<sup>170</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 40. This question of whether Latitudinarians properly speaking held to “heterodox” views of the Trinity or simply tended to not emphasize the importance of a particular understanding depends largely upon who one chooses to call a Latitudinarian.

<sup>171</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 60.

significantly distinguished the Latitudinarians theologically from Evangelicals. Burnet's views of the precise occurrence of justification can confidently be used to summarize the general Latitudinarian attitude on this point: so long as humans do not "imagine that the condition upon which justification is offered is the consideration that moves God," and since "all are agreed that good works are necessary to salvation," it follows that "it is a speculation of little consequence whether works are a condition of justification or the effect of justifying faith."<sup>172</sup>

Since salvation depended in some way on good works, many Latitudinarians would have considered themselves part of an Arminianism consciously opposed to Calvinism. They affirmed "the importance of conditions for salvation" as well as "the pre-Augustinian, Erasmian, and Arminian view that man's will is free, that God's grace is given to all, and that man can work with or against it as he chooses."<sup>173</sup> Even allowing for those who did not commit to full scale Arminianism, Latitudinarians overwhelmingly opposed the "Calvinist doctrines of irresistible grace and imputed righteousness because they thought these attribute everything to God and nothing to man."<sup>174</sup> Opposition to the particular doctrines of Calvinism did not arise only from the perception that Calvinism tended to inculcate antinomianism and would lead to a lax morality and breakdown of civil order, all of which High Church and evangelical Arminians also believed. Latitudinarians believed that Calvinist morality rested on conceptions of God that contradicted a rational faith by presenting a moral code based on the "positive or arbitrary command of a mysterious God" rather than self-evident, rationally discerned principles.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 75.

<sup>173</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 73.

<sup>174</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 73.

<sup>175</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 63. Latitudinarianism took equal issue with Catholicism, seeing within it several doctrines, such as transubstantiation, that were not only beyond, but were repugnant to, reason.

As Latitudinarians were minimizing the “speculative” aspects of Christianity, they were elevating its moral dimension. Indeed, for many it appears that *the* goal and purpose of Christianity is perpetuating and perfecting human morality. Isabel Rivers provides a summary of the Latitudinarian view of morality and its relationship to religion in the following way:

Man is by nature sociable and disposed to act well; sin is an unnatural deviation from this disposition; man naturally pursues happiness, though he often miscalculates the method of attaining it; happiness is achieved through holiness, and understood properly is in fact the same thing; the religious life is the most advantageous because religion enables man to act according to his true nature and in his own best interest by choosing the path that will make him holy and therefore happy. It is the task of the religious moralist to channel man’s innate desire for happiness by appealing to his prudence and self-interest in demonstrating that the rewards of the religious life easily outweigh any others. The religious man is holy and happy, prudent and wise, rewarded here as well as hereafter.<sup>176</sup>

Some of this understanding of morality accords unproblematically with most Christian teaching, particularly in the claims of Christian morality leading to happiness. But there are many important, if at times subtle, distinctions between the Latitudinarians and other major theological trends in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – particularly the evangelicals, whether Arminian or Calvinist. While acceptance of sin’s distorting effects distinguished Latitudinarians from Deists or many Socinians, they still had an optimistic picture of human nature even after the Fall. All human beings retain a capacity to know the moral law through reason.<sup>177</sup> There was greater diversity of opinion regarding sin’s effect on an innate human capacity to follow that moral law, although there was a marked tendency to regard “vice, sin, or human degeneracy as very much within human control.”<sup>178</sup> While many might still consider the Latitudinarian view Pelagian, they differed from the more liberal theological positions (Deist, Socinian, Unitarian) by maintaining a need for divine grace in actually carrying out the commands of the moral law. Human co-

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<sup>176</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 77

<sup>177</sup> For many within the movement “reason” had strong moral connotations, either containing the “inscription” of the eternal and immutable moral law or being the principle faculty for the judging good and evil (Rivers, 64)

<sup>178</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 79.



operation and effort are necessary for and capable of returning “degenerate, abused, and vicious nature” to “its original ingenuity and goodness,” but these always require some co-operation with divine grace.<sup>179</sup> Still, Latitudinarians maintained a much higher view of the innate human capacity for goodness, both epistemically and soteriologically, than did classical Reformers such as Calvin, Luther, or Cranmer.

The Latitudinarian understanding of salvation differed from its traditional Christian counterpart in other important ways. To begin with, the Latitudinarians emphasized the ease of following through with the moral expectations of Christianity. They vehemently rejected the idea that “suffering is a necessary part of the Christian life” and they maintained that Christianity not only should not oppose pleasure, but it in fact facilitated the greatest intra-mundane pleasure and happiness.<sup>180</sup> The emphasis on the telos of human life as holiness and holiness being coterminous with happiness may push against this divergence with more traditional orthodox concepts of the relationship between morality and salvation. Some Latitudinarians even would go so far as to say that the goal of the Christian life was deformity or “imitation or participation in the divine nature,” which is a view that strongly resembles the Wesleyan understanding of the plan of salvation.<sup>181</sup> However, unlike the Wesleyan or other classical understandings of Sanctification, Latitudinarians saw this transformation of human nature as an increasing capacity to conform to the external, behavioral demands of the moral law. They hardly emphasized the need for the transformation of one’s relationship to or knowledge of God, if this was a concern at all. Similarly, heaven and hell became almost exclusively the necessary incentives for motivating

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<sup>179</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 81.

<sup>180</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 84.

<sup>181</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 83.

proper moral behavior. Thus, Latitudinarians reversed most traditional relationships between sin and salvation. Rather than having the afterlife as something like the beatific vision and generally emphasizing growth in perfection or knowledge and love of God as the goal of human life, Latitudinarians saw the promise of eternal reward or punishment as the means of impelling the believer to live the moral life. Finally, the Latitudinarian strongly emphasized what Cragg calls the “self-motive principle,” i.e., that prudent self-interest provided the primary motive for the Christian life. Even if this was primarily a rhetorical strategy, viz., that “most people can be persuaded to do what they should” only through appeals to self-interest, this still imparted the sense that the practice of Christianity need not aim at deepening one’s relationship with God.<sup>182</sup>

Latitudinarians were distinguished not only by their theological configuration, but also by certain commonly held rhetorical and stylistic features, polemical opponents, political affiliations, and tendencies in church practice. Isabel Rivers has done a marvelous job of explaining that Latitudinarianism (as well as many other 18<sup>th</sup> century movements) was defined not only by certain beliefs, but also by a certain communicative style. Like the Deists, the Latitudinarians favored a style of accessible, reasoned argument. However, whereas the Deists generally limited themselves to philosophical and theological disputations, Latitudinarians wrote three kinds of works: “controversial works and treatises; handbooks; and sermons.”<sup>183</sup> Appeals to the reasonableness and practicality of Christian faith meant that these works contained rational argumentation to promote their position, and even – or particularly – the sermons emphasized a “rational and expository element” in a conscious departure from the emotional appeals in Puritan preaching.<sup>184</sup> Nevertheless, far from the Deist goal of convincing people of the untenable nature

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<sup>182</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 58.

<sup>183</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 44.

of orthodox Christianity through reason and ridicule, Latitudinarians had a strong sense of pastoral responsibility.

Moderation was for them a cardinal virtue and they saw in this the true nature of Anglicanism as a *via media*.<sup>185</sup> Thus, they saw opponents on two sides. On the one hand, they fought against appeals to arbitrary authority, anti-rationalism, and enthusiasm found in Puritanism, Roman Catholicism, and later evangelicalism broadly conceived. On the other hand, they felt themselves defenders of orthodox Christian belief against Arianism, Socinianism, Deism, and atheism (which generally meant Hobbsean materialism).<sup>186</sup>

Flowing from the “modest and utilitarian” view of the role of the sacraments, their aversion to mystery, and their emphasis on rational exposition of thought, the Latitudinarians would be classed as “low church” according to contemporary designations of churchmanship.<sup>187</sup> They also made up the bulk of the “low church” party understood in the more political, pre-Tractarian sense of the term. “Low church” in this sense meant supporting a Whig political program, greater church subordination to the state, and, for the more liberal Latitudinarians, a belief in the church as “essentially a voluntary society.”<sup>188</sup> Latitudinarians shared a desire to expand the range of acceptable forms of religiosity within the nation. Some sought to accomplish this through comprehension, which is to say they sought to expand the acceptable range of discipline and ceremonial in the established church to entice more moderate (largely

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<sup>184</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 51.

<sup>185</sup> Although, as with claims to having “authentic teaching” or “opposing enthusiasm,” almost every party in the Church of England claimed to be the “true” standard bearer of the *via media*.

<sup>186</sup> See Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 45-50.

<sup>187</sup> Cragg, *Reason and Authority*, 60.

<sup>188</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 46.

Presbyterian) Dissenters to rejoin the Church of England.<sup>189</sup> Others favored toleration, which would have extended religious liberties for dissenting groups without necessarily making the state church more accommodating for those who remained within its bounds.

The Latitudinarian dual impulse toward greater toleration in church governance and less restrictive doctrinal formulae came to a head during the Feather's Tavern controversy of 1772, when several of the most liberal Anglicans sought Parliamentary relaxation of the requirement of subscription. While some undoubtedly sympathized with this cause yet remained relatively orthodox in their own beliefs, many others perceived this action, and probably not without some merit, as an attempt by private Arians and Socinians to go public without losing the protection and benefits provided by membership in the established church.<sup>190</sup>

Interestingly, while it was in many ways a logical conclusion of the theo-political alliance found in much liberal 18<sup>th</sup> century Anglicanism, the Feather's Tavern controversy symbolized an important point in the shifting balance of power from the Latitudinarian to the more traditionally orthodox factions of the church. In addition to occasioning an uneasy temporary alliance between High Church and Evangelical factions against a liberalism that had transgressed its bounds, the political shifts in Great Britain following the American War for Independence and especially the French Revolution meant that Anglican liberalism became increasingly unfashionable.<sup>191</sup> Latitudinarianism would continue to make theological contributions, but from this point on, the real conflict over Anglican identity played out between High Churchmen and Evangelicals. Before looking at early British evangelicalism, with attention to what distinguished Anglican

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<sup>189</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 33.

<sup>190</sup> Walsh and Taylor, "Anglican Church," 47.

<sup>191</sup> It is true that some Latitudinarian luminaries, such as Paley, had barely begun their intellectual careers at this point, but it is also true that Paley was blocked from rising to higher ecclesial office because of suspicion about the orthodoxy of his belief when a few generations before he would almost certainly not have faced the same obstacles.

Evangelicals from their dissenting peers, I will finish this chapter by describing the intellectual and cultural features of High Church Anglicanism in the long 18<sup>th</sup> century.

At this point I have used terms such as “Orthodox,” “High Church,” and “non-Evangelical Orthodox” to describe a distinct configuration of theological, ecclesial, and political views that were neither Latitudinarian nor Evangelical. Peter Nockles points to two trends, going in contrary directions, that have made this group difficult to clearly distinguish. On the one hand is the tendency to see pre-Tractarian church affiliation as perfectly aligning with the firm categories of post-Tractarian churchmanship. On the other, there is the tendency to argue that the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Church of England shared too great a sense of unity to recognize anything like Church parties prior to the 1830s. Nockles makes the compelling case that the answer lies somewhere in the middle, with the modern reader able to see clearly distinguishable tendencies toward forms of churchmanship, but always understanding that these categories usually proved more fluid and overlapping than in the post-Tractarian world. Some of these parties carried over even as they were transformed, while others represented substantial re-alignment.<sup>192</sup> One need look no further than figures such as John Wesley and Bishop Beilby Porteus to see how “evangelical” and “high church” could overlap substantially.<sup>193</sup>

One significant problem for naming this group is that this tradition went through a greater evolution during the long 18<sup>th</sup> century than either the Evangelicals or Latitudinarians. Thus, I will present some of the movement’s background but focus on the tradition in its late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century forms – the time most pertinent to the question of Coleridge’s affiliation.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> E.g., Liberals tended to be the “low church” group prior to the 1830s, and this nomenclature only became associated with Evangelicals after the polarizing debates between Tractarians and Evangelicals in the 1830s and 40s.

<sup>193</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 347.

<sup>194</sup> The other problem is that the endonyms describing these movements at their inception often differ from how we now identify them. Adherents of the tradition that would eventually be referred to as “High Church” often referred

The Restoration settlement provides a good starting point for a description of the High Church tradition in the long 18<sup>th</sup> century. The return of Stuart rule in 1660 when Charles II became king meant also the return of those royalists who had escaped to France, the release of imprisoned loyalists, and the reemergence of those forced to hide, obscure, or suppress their preferred pre-Interregnum worship according to the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>195</sup> As the new Prayer Book that the king would authorize in 1662 was being created, defenders of the pre-Civil War Episcopal Church of England wanted something very similar to the more conservative 1549 Book of Common Prayer, rather than the 1607 revision of the 1559 product of the Elizabethan Settlement.<sup>196</sup> In setting the tenor for the Restoration Church by pushing for a strong adherence to the Divine Right of Kings, an emphasis on the spiritual authority of the Church, and the need for conformity, one could argue that the draconian and even vengeful approach of these ecclesial authorities helped precipitate the Glorious Revolution and the dethroning of James II.

With the ascent of William and Mary, the “High Church” movement experienced a schism significant enough to weaken its political influence and open the door for a Latitudinarian ascendancy. While many of the High Churchmen were able – often with great reluctance – to see the legitimacy of the transition from James II to William and Mary, a strong adherence to

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to themselves as “Orthodox” from the later 17<sup>th</sup> through the mid-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Prior to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term “High Church” was often a term of abuse for those favoring a kind of ecclesial Toryism. Only with people like Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) did some come, “in a conscious repudiation of the pejoratively political connotations attached to the term,” to define “High Church” in “a positive, theological sense” (Nockles, “Church Parties,” 341). Still, I will still use the term “High Church” to name this tradition. First, even given Nockles’ nuance on this point, he still refers to the High Church tradition in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to contrast it with Evangelical and Latitudinarian/liberal traditions, so this seems to be the most accepted usage for this group. Second, while this group in the period prior to the one most pertinent to Coleridge referred to themselves as “Orthodox,” they began to own the term “High Church” during Coleridge’s lifetime. Furthermore, while “High Church” possibly over and underrepresents the tradition in certain limit situations, it is not so elastic as the term “Orthodox,” which could cover everything from all who embraced a traditional doctrine of the Trinity to specifically those described below (Nockles, “Church Parties,” 338).

<sup>195</sup> Alan Jacobs, *The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 80-2.

<sup>196</sup> Jacobs, *Book of Common Prayer*, 83-4.

doctrines such as the Divine Right of Kings meant that others could not swear allegiance to the new monarchs. The failure of the “non-Juror” clergy, a group encompassing even the then Archbishop of Canterbury, to pledge fealty to the new rulers meant that “they were first suspended and then deprived of their offices, as were some 300-400 inferior clergy and an unknown number of laity who followed them.”<sup>197</sup>

This schism and the vacancies left by top non-Jurors decreased the ecclesial and political authority of High Churchmanship, with the balance shifting for the next 50-70 years toward Latitudinarians. This power imbalance continued in part because the High Churchmen remained tainted by an association with Jacobite politics, and the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite rebellions certainly did nothing to alleviate fears that High Churchmen had questionable loyalties.<sup>198</sup> However, while this tradition might have gone on the political defensive, historians generally reject a late Victorian view of a Latitudinarian monopoly on power and are fairly “confident that ‘high’ Anglicanism existed as a potent force throughout the eighteenth century.”<sup>199</sup>

Particularly in the early part of the long 18<sup>th</sup> century, High Churchmanship described a nebulous class, identifying those conservative “Tory” (or even Jacobite) members of the establishment. The successors of the Oxford Movement might have come to favor disestablishment, but Toryism continued to permeate most of the High Churchmanship during the long 18<sup>th</sup> century. The High Church tradition tended to have a high view of the spiritual authority of the Church and its capacity to act as a force for social stability and order. This group acted as some of the fiercest opponents of Dissent and argued for greater uniformity within the

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<sup>197</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 5.

<sup>198</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 5.

<sup>199</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 34.

National Church. Following in the tradition of adherence to the Divine Right of Kings, High Churchmen emphasized the authority of the monarch over that of parliament. This should not be seen as Erastianism, though; High Churchmen would have understood a symbiotic relationship between church and state rather than a subordination of the church to the state.

Of course, some people held these political positions without having the accompanying theological and liturgical views associated with “High Churchmanship,” and others would have fallen into such a theological camp without the corresponding political views. Nevertheless, these political views, particularly the importance of a unified and authoritative church, did find support in some of the theological positions that distinguished “High Church” Anglicanism from other forms of orthodoxy. In principle, High Churchmen would not have differed substantially from other orthodox Anglicans on points of doctrine. Where they differed was in which points they emphasized and how they interpreted them. These points of divergence, particularly with the Evangelicals, occurred in relationship to Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Pneumatology. Evangelicals and High Churchmen would split not over the Trinity or other issues related to the Doctrine of God, but rather on justification and the economy of salvation. The most defining feature of the High Church view would be the close relationship between justification and the mediating activity of the structures of the Church. There were certainly High Church thinkers who moved in the direction of a Latitudinarian focus on works antecedent to justification, but there were also those like Daubeney who would join Evangelicals in focusing on Christ’s sacrifice on the cross alone as that which secures the grace necessary for salvation.<sup>200</sup> However they saw the relationship between moral acts and justification, High Churchmen agreed that the Church played a necessary role in mediating any divine grace necessary for salvation.

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<sup>200</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 342.



Specifically the High Church tradition advocated for the need for proper apostolic succession to ensure ecclesial legitimacy. In other words, many in this group believed that “though the grace of God and faith and belief in the Gospels were the foundation stones for salvation, the church remained the place wherein one came to a knowledge of such truth.”<sup>201</sup>

Because the post-Tractarian world equates Evangelicalism with “low” churchmanship and the High Church tradition with a very strong belief in the real presence, even bordering upon transubstantiation, in the Eucharist, one may assume that the primary sacrament dividing these two groups in a pre-Tractarian world was the Eucharist. However, while some High Church figures held to a very strong “virtualist” view of Christ’s real presence in the sacrament, most “were at one with the Evangelicals in taking the so-called ‘Receptionist’ view as expounded by Hooker and Daniel Waterland,” and it was the Latitudinarians who held to the “Zwinglian idea of the eucharist as a bare memorial of Our Lord’s passion.”<sup>202</sup> Instead, it was the sacrament of Baptism that “notoriously divided Orthodox and Evangelicals in the pre-Tractarian era.”<sup>203</sup> Evangelicals allowed for a range of positions on the question of baptismal regeneration from a flat out rejection of this idea to some form of moderate acceptance that there were some spiritual effects of Baptism, but the High Church tradition almost universally held unwaveringly to a view of baptismal regeneration in which Baptism *was* the new birth and justifying grace “inseparably accompanied baptism.”<sup>204</sup> If there were any aspects of theology that united the High Church tradition diachronically as well as synchronically through the long 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was these two:

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<sup>201</sup> Robert D. Cornwall, “The Church and Salvation: An Early Eighteenth-Century High Church Anglican Perspective,” in *Anglican and Episcopal History* 62, no. 2 (1993), 180-1.

<sup>202</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 344.

<sup>203</sup> Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 229.

<sup>204</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 230.

the close associations between the apostolically legitimate Episcopal Church of England and salvation, and between justifying grace and baptismal regeneration.

One point on which the High Church tradition tended to be unified, and it only became more distinct as an identifying marker in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, was an adherence to Arminianism in opposition to Calvinism.<sup>205</sup> By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (important for our study because this period spans all of Coleridge’s adult life), the High Church party was exclusively made of up Arminians. Indicative of how much this had become an identifying factor for High Churchmen were the terms of internal debate on this issue. Whether one would possibly flirt with Calvinism seemed beyond the pale; the real debate was whether it was enough simply to be an Arminian or whether one had to take a more active stance by publicly resisting Calvinism. Some few Evangelicals considered themselves Arminians,<sup>206</sup> but by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Arminianism within the Church of England was closely associated with the High Church tradition while Calvinism was almost exclusively the domain of the Evangelical party.<sup>207</sup>

From the vantage point of the long 18<sup>th</sup> century as a whole, the High Church tradition did not present a single front on the question of interior spirituality. Contrary to a common perception – perpetuated in no small part by the Oxford Movement’s own attempts at reforming the tradition – about the nature of pre-Tractarian High Church piety as “high and dry,” i.e., lacking any concern for or having hostility toward the affective or inward dimensions of spiritual experience, this does not seem to be the case for a good portion of the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 342.

<sup>206</sup> Most Anglican Evangelicals either identified as Calvinists or rejected identification with Arminianism, but some could accept this title. However, most evangelical Arminians in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century belonged to dissenting (mainly Baptist and Wesleyan Methodist) bodies.

<sup>207</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 342-3. In other words, in the Church of England, Arminianism was a necessary but not sufficient mark of High Church identity, but identifying with Calvinism (or its equivalent claim of a “common Reformation” or “Augustinian” identity) was sufficient in almost every case to mark one as an Evangelical.

century proper. Probably the most distinctive High Church spirituality in the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century came from the Hutchinsonians, who took their primary influence from the writings of John Hutchinson. Hutchinson had developed a “school of philosophy and theology which held that God had revealed to mankind from the beginning of the world a means of understanding the created world, and this was embodied in the writings of Moses.”<sup>208</sup> While the movement was not at first “conspicuously Anglican,” it eventually lost some of its more esoteric features as it sought a revival in the Church of England of a combined “Christian godliness and Christian order.”<sup>209</sup> The movement took hold at Oxford as a kind of spiritual successor to the Oxford Methodists and, like the Methodists, contemporaries often accused them of “enthusiasm.”<sup>210</sup>

Nevertheless, dominant Georgian High Churchmanship remained suspicious of or hostile to what it saw as excessively “subjective emotionalism,” favoring a “practical spirituality based on good works nourished by sacramental grace and exemplified in acts of self-denial and charity.”<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, for however much some groups may have emphasized inner spiritual intensity in parts of 18<sup>th</sup> century High Church Anglicanism, the identifier “high and dry” remains appropriate for the most significant strand of early 19<sup>th</sup> century High Church piety – the Hackney Phalanx.<sup>212</sup> The Phalanx not only focused on the liturgy and sacraments while minimizing the role of preaching (all fully regulated by valid ecclesial oversight), but they were also “strongly

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<sup>208</sup> Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship in the Church of England* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 89.

<sup>209</sup> Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship*, 90.

<sup>210</sup> For all the “warmth,” of Hutchinsonian spirituality reminiscent of thinkers like Herbert, Ken, and Nelson that was “alien to the prevailing Georgian High Anglicanism,” it never developed the same emphasis on intense emotional experiences as evidence of the work of the Spirit that was to be found in Methodism or even Anglican Evangelism (Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship*, 91).

<sup>211</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 26.

<sup>212</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 196.

opposed to introspection, self-examination and the uninhibited expression of religious feelings.”<sup>213</sup> Importantly, the Phalanx, and not the Hutchinsonians, would have determined the character of High Church piety for the entire period of Coleridge’s return to Anglicanism. Because they strongly opposed an introspective piety (and evangelicals strongly encouraged one), the role of introspection in Coleridge’s thought will prove significant in determining his relationship to early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican movements.

High Church Anglicans, no less than any other movement under consideration, distinguished themselves not only through their constellation of thought and practice, but also through the authorities by which they grounded that constellation. In line with Article 6, they maintained the primacy of Scripture, affirming that it “contained all things necessary unto salvation.” However, Scripture was authoritative only insofar as it was “understood in the light of antiquity,” meaning “the writings of the Fathers” and “those councils of the early church considered truly ecumenical.”<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, the 18<sup>th</sup> century High Churchmen saw themselves as continuing the tradition of those Carolinian divines such as Laud and Hammond who saw the church as “transmitting to posterity an apostolic order and a static deposit of doctrine handed down from the Catholic antiquity of the ante-Nicene Fathers.”<sup>215</sup>

While they had a higher view of “Doctrine” (because of their view of ecclesial authority) than other 18<sup>th</sup> century Anglicans, High Churchmen often proved hesitant to see this doctrinal authority in the 39 Articles. Owing to their Arminianism, High Churchmen remained suspicious of Articles highlighting the Calvinist/Reformed convictions of Cranmer and other early English

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<sup>213</sup> Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship*, 110.

<sup>214</sup> Nockles, *High Churchmanship*, 104.

<sup>215</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 30.

reformers (notably Article 17 “On Predestination”) and they could only subscribe in good conscience by accepting questionable interpretations that introduced numerous caveats. With liberal claimants to orthodoxy, some High Church subscribers “reassured themselves with the argument of Bishop Burnett that, though the Articles demanded ‘assent,’ they were framed in such a way as to be taken in different and even contradictory senses.”<sup>216</sup> Going into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, High Churchmen began to put out periodicals associated with their distinctive doctrinal and ecclesial views, the most important being *The Orthodox Churchman’s Magazine* (1801), *The British Critic* (1793), and *The Christian Remembrancer* (1818).<sup>217</sup>

The long 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a range of religious options which variously overlapped in terms of theological position, liturgical preference, and understanding of authority. Still one can discern recognizable matrices of distinguishable religious traditions. At the same time, there are certain elements in common between all these schools of thought. These traditions all emphasized the need to rein in “enthusiasm.”<sup>218</sup> They focused on the imminent order in a way that simultaneously placed God at a distance from everyday human life. While highly rationalist traditions emphasized each individual’s capacity to use the light of reason to arrive at truths about God and the world, this rational inquiry was generally oriented toward the practical ordering of human life, with God being seen as largely uninvolved in the world. The Latitudinarian commitment to formal doctrinal orthodoxy occurred in concurrence with an overwhelming emphasis on the moral dimension of Christianity; they focused on the intramundane by shifting the focus from God as an object of worship and goal of human life to

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<sup>216</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 48.

<sup>217</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 51.

<sup>218</sup> As well as those visible characteristics associated with enthusiasm, such as religious appeals to the affections or the need for emotional confirmation and religious certainty

guarantor of the moral order. Even the High Church tradition exhibited this by emphasizing the distance between humans and God that required the mediation of ecclesial structures.

The rather provocative nature of my thesis sets before me a greater burden of proof than would normally be expected for this kind of project. I have therefore provided substantial detail about trends in religious thought in Britain's long 18<sup>th</sup> century to alleviate any doubts that may arise that I have compared Coleridge's thought to an "evangelicalism" largely composed of elements common in many other 18<sup>th</sup> century religious movements. Beyond the attempt to make clear the defining features of the religious movements forming the background of Coleridge's thought, this chapter serves the more particular purpose of pointing to a substantial and likely essential fault line between evangelicalism and most other movements of the time: the connection between the goal of human life and God's relationship to the world. Evangelicals would reverse the relationship described above, placing the goal of human life in God and thus outside the world of everyday life while simultaneously lessening the mediating factors between God and humanity. Thus, while I believe that I can show Coleridge to exhibit nearly all the individual defining features of Evangelicalism that this chapter places into sharper relief, I also believe that his general theological temperament places him on the evangelical side of this fault line. However, before showing that Coleridge exhibited the defining features of an Anglican Evangelical, I first must explain what those features were. I take on this this task of describing the overall character of evangelicalism in Britain's long 18<sup>th</sup> century in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3:

### A WORLD ON FIRE OR A GLOWING HEARTH? BRITISH EVANGELICALISM'S ORIGINS, DEFINING FEATURES, AND INTERNAL DISTINCTIONS

My assertion that Samuel Taylor Coleridge became some kind of Evangelical Anglican prior to his death likely arouses some degree of incredulity – and rightfully so – in part because it runs contrary to the long held scholarly consensus. At the same time, I have an intuition that this methodological suspicion may be heightened by suspicions about the specific movement in which I am placing Coleridge. “Evangelicalism” in the minds of many, both within and without the movement, can conjure a sense of anti-intellectualism, opposition to science, a cult of feeling, rigid, graceless exclusivism regarding other religious traditions, and reactionary politics.<sup>219</sup> Regardless of the nuances lost in these generalization, they do contain some degree of truth. At the same time, even recognizing that the various forms of contemporary evangelicalism developed from the forms the movement took in its first and second generations, one must take care to recognize the significant changes this movement underwent in the intervening two centuries. This need to differentiate between forms of evangelicalism applies all that much more when discussing early Anglican Evangelicalism. While it may not be true of worldwide Anglicanism, significant misunderstandings about the nature and significance of this movement occur even within the Episcopal Church, the standard bearer of the Anglican tradition in the United States. I hope therefore that this chapter can put a certain critical distance between the

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<sup>219</sup> The 2016 American presidential election, in which 81% of self-professed “white born-again/evangelicals” voted for Donald Trump, certainly did little to help diminish this perception, but I believe this makes a work exploring the origins of evangelicalism and how it differs from its contemporary incarnations all that much more important.

“evangelicalism” of the long 18<sup>th</sup> century and of today so that one can discuss the degree to which Coleridge should be associated with this movement without bias from the term “evangelical.”

In this chapter I will describe the matrix of identifying features that would mark someone as a first or second generation evangelical as well as those that specifically applied to that subset within the Church of England.<sup>220</sup> Many scholars who deal with early British evangelicalism tend to look at the movement’s ideational features and then see issues of evangelical rhetoric and culture through that lens. My approach, while drawing significantly on the work of these scholars, will look at the ideational features of early evangelicalism as part of a larger, interrelated web that includes the sources of authority evangelicals appealed to for their views, the figures that they tended to read and draw from, the ways in which they characterized (or mischaracterized) their opponents, and how those outside the movement saw them.

First, I will attempt to give an abbreviated account of the history of British evangelicalism in the long 18th century by providing the background conditions from which British evangelicalism emerged, its relationship to the larger Pietist and revival movements in the North Atlantic world, and the emergence and growth of the movement from the 1730s until the 1830s. Second, drawing particularly upon the work of David Bebbington and Reginald Ward, I

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<sup>220</sup> I must distinguish between various terms that describe this phenomenon and which refer to overlapping but distinct forms of the phenomenon. To begin with, the most general term would be “evangelicalism” (lower case), which was not the most used contemporary term, but which is generally used by scholars to describe the British, and potentially early American, forms of the larger North Atlantic Pietist/Revival movement beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Second, “Methodism” usually denotes the Arminian form of British and American evangelicalism first under the control of John and Charles Wesley. However, “Methodism” could also be employed in two other important ways. First, it can properly describe those who came into the revival through the network of Calvinist Methodist societies associated with George Whitfield. Second, one often encounters the term “Methodist” used as a term of abuse by those outside of the evangelical movement for everyone they perceived to be engaged in religious enthusiasm or fanaticism, including many who were not officially associated with Methodists proper. Finally, the term “Evangelical” (capitalized) designates those (mainly Calvinist) generally not directly associated with the Wesleys’ or Whitfield’s networks who were much more firmly committed to the regularity of the Church of England but nevertheless had a similar theological outlook and emphases as others within the Revival.



will attempt to chart the explicit theological understandings and emphases of the broader evangelical movement. After this, I will analyze the ways in which the larger evangelical movement was perceived, and in many ways caricatured, by non-evangelicals.

After giving this broader overview of British evangelicalism, which included Wesleyan and Calvinist Methodism, much of “New Dissent,” and the Anglican Evangelicals, focus will shift to the intricacies of Anglican Evangelicalism. Anglican Evangelicals retained the common features of the broader movement, but they did so in a way distinctive to them and had internal divisions and controversies equally distinct for them. For instance, Evangelicals legitimized themselves through appeals to the Reformers and claims of truly adhering to the 39 Articles; they were the only members of the Church of England during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries not to find identification with Calvinism odious; and they distanced themselves from dissenting evangelicals through their commitment to the liturgy and order of the Establishment. I will also describe the conflict between moderate Evangelicals and radical Evangelicals that emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and intensified during the 1820s.

Of all the major theological traditions discussed in this and the preceding chapter, evangelicalism is the youngest, and did not really emerge on the British landscape until the late 1730s and early 1740s.<sup>221</sup> The relatively late emergence of evangelicalism owes much to the fact that it represented a new tradition with less claim to direct continuity with 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century religious movements than the other traditions discussed in this work. The oft repeated charge of “enthusiasm” leveled against Methodism arose from a perceived “association of the Methodists with Cromwell’s Puritans and with other evangelical and religiously occult groups.”<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> John Wesley’s 1739 field preaching in Bristol is often identified as the beginning of the Wesleyan Methodist revival, but not the Methodist movement, which began in the late 1720s at Oxford.

<sup>222</sup> Albert M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked* (London: Epworth Press, 1960), 32.

Evangelicals did draw inspiration from Puritan sources and shared certain theological features in common with them, but there is not nearly the same degree of continuity between the 18<sup>th</sup> century Revival and earlier Puritanism as there is between, for instance, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century High Churchmanship.<sup>223</sup> The Restoration settlement had transformed Puritans into Dissent, which, as stated before, either started down the road of greater and greater theological rationalism or focused inward with increasingly dogmatic and rigid forms. The First Great Awakening in New England certainly kindled a hope among some early 18<sup>th</sup> century Dissenters such as Isaac Watts who believed a movement born in the dissenting churches would revitalize a tepid and lax British Christianity. However, such a dream was never realized and the British evangelical awakening emerged from what seemed a curious and unlikely intersection of forces: its early leaders were committed to the Church of England, formed by High Church 17<sup>th</sup> century piety and Arminian theology, and indebted to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century moralist crusade for the reformation of manners. As John Walsh observes, “When the revival arrived, it came, paradoxically, not among the Calvinist Dissenters who had corresponded about it, and prayed about it, but in an Arminian Church of England in which the old Puritan Calvinism was almost virtually extinct, and the prejudice against spirit-filled ‘enthusiasm’ almost an obsession.”<sup>224</sup>

When the evangelical revival emerged and its effects began to spread throughout Great Britain and beyond, many contemporaries saw it as though it came out of nowhere.<sup>225</sup> However, the British revival was one of the last of a string of revival movements in America, Continental

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<sup>223</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 1989), 35.

<sup>224</sup> John Walsh, “‘Methodism’ and the Origins of English-Speaking Evangelicalism,” in *Evangelicalism*, eds. Mark Noll et al. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), 22.

<sup>225</sup> A perception perpetuated by many historians who have often, until recently, taken a relatively insular view of the religious revival, as well as by those denominational historians wanting to emphasize the revival as a genuine outpouring of the Spirit.

Europe and Britain that occurred in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. A sophisticated communications network existed to link German Pietists, American Revivalists, and the emerging evangelicals in Britain, and those in Britain indeed saw themselves as part of a larger revival of Christian piety.<sup>226</sup> Reginald Ward, pushing for a more global view of early evangelicalism, argues convincingly that one should not view national revivals as isolated occurrences, but as components in an interrelated Euro-American movement with origins in the German-speaking world.<sup>227</sup> Beyond the North Atlantic exchange of evangelical religious literature and letters, Britain's relative religious and political tolerance compared to continental Europe also primed the island for a religious awakening. Under George I and II, Great Britain welcomed waves of religious refugees seeking both protection from increasing Catholic hostility to Protestantism<sup>228</sup> and an increasing attempt at religious uniformity in the modern bureaucratic state.<sup>229</sup> This wave of religious immigration also included active missionary efforts, such as Zinzendorf's Moravians who sought missionary opportunities in Great Britain and especially its American colonies.<sup>230</sup>

Undoubtedly the most significant development in the early Evangelical Revival was Methodism, and three figures proved indispensable to the emergence of this movement: John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield.<sup>231</sup> Brothers John (1703) and Charles (1707)

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<sup>226</sup> Walsh, "Methodism and Origins," 19.

<sup>227</sup> See W. Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>228</sup> Such as French Huguenots

<sup>229</sup> Walsh, "Methodism and Origins," 20.

<sup>230</sup> Dietrich Meyer, "Zinzendorf und Herrnhut," in *Geschichte des Pietismus, vol. II Der Pietismus im 18 Jahrhundert*, ed. Martin Brecht and Klaus Deppermann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 40-45.

<sup>231</sup> Historians of the movement have engaged in a considerable debate as to whether one should properly consider the evangelical revival in Britain to have begun with the Oxford Methodism of the late 1720s or with the Bristol

were born in Epworth, England to Samuel and Susannah Wesley. Both came from families with deep roots in Puritanism and Dissent which had suffered under the Restoration and Great Ejection in the 1660s; nonetheless, Samuel and Susannah would return to the Church of England. Susannah, who significantly influenced her sons's early education, imparted some of her Puritan heritage, but Samuel embraced a High Church approach both to theology and politics. Their father's high churchmanship likely played an important role in the transmission of Non-Juror thought as well as that of Caroline Divines such as Jeremy Taylor to the Wesley brothers. Furthermore, Samuel became involved in the moral reform movement of the late 1690s and took an active part in the newly formed SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge).<sup>232</sup>

After receiving his Bachelor of Arts from Christ Church, Oxford in 1724, John began studying for his M.A. in 1725 while moving toward ordination to the priesthood. John committed himself to a course of readings from the Pietist holy living tradition and a meticulous moral self-examination. This study included authors such as Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor, Robert Nelson, and William Beveridge, and, inspired by Taylor, he began keeping a "diary as a record and measure of his progress in holy living."<sup>233</sup> In 1726 Charles arrived at Christ Church, and, after a year of what he considered an unfulfilling moral laxity, he, like his brother, "threw

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field preaching in 1739. However, for our purposes, determining what precisely constituted a "preparatory stage" as opposed to the beginning of evangelicalism proper in Britain seems immaterial. The Wesleys and Whitfield were formed theologically in ways that would carry over into their work as revivalists prior to 1739 and the organizational forms and network of itineracy that would become a hallmark of the Methodist side of the evangelical revival certainly preceded and helped prepare for the more revivalist turn that it took after that point. What cannot be avoided, however, is the centrality of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitfield for the emergence of the British Evangelical revival. Certainly, there were other important early figures, and certain important branches of the evangelical movement seem to have emerged independently of work done by these three (most notably the Anglican proto-Evangelicals), but almost no one could claim to have done more to help define and direct the inchoate movement in its theology, organizational forms, and style than these three.

<sup>232</sup> Exposure to the small group organizational structure of this movement provided a template for the early Oxford Methodist Societies.

<sup>233</sup> Richard Heizenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 40.

himself into his studies and devotions.”<sup>234</sup> Beginning with a group of two or three fellow students, Charles formed the “holy club,” the members of which would come also to be known as the “Oxford Methodists.” They dedicated themselves to frequent communing, “intense bible study and other serious reading,” strict adherence to church fast days, giving to the poor, and visitation of prisoners.<sup>235</sup> Until the Wesley brothers left for Georgia in 1735, the Methodists saw the emergence of new societies at other Oxford Colleges while they grew in notoriety, and, to a substantial extent, infamy. John and Charles exercised direct supervision of this “core group” of Methodists, but the larger Oxford movement was more a loose affiliation of like-minded students. Nevertheless, John did become the Methodists’ chief spokesperson and apologist as he defended the movement from charges either of undue scrupulosity or enthusiasm. Through this work the term “Methodism,” originally a term of abuse leveled against the group, was adopted as a positive descriptor of the inchoate movement.<sup>236</sup>

In the early 1730s, George Whitfield, the third and youngest of these most important figures in the coming Revival, joined the Oxford Methodists. Whitfield was born in 1714 in Gloucester to a family of some means, but declining fortunes, providing him with an inferiority complex. Unlike the Wesleys, Whitfield grew up in a Church of England household without any meaningful ties to Dissent or Nonconformity. He was urged to seek a clerical profession, but it seems more from a sense of the opportunity this offered to regain social status than from a profound spiritual calling. In his home, “there was certainly no deep spiritual concern or biblical instruction comparable to that of a Susannah Wesley.”<sup>237</sup> Arriving at Oxford, Whitfield intended

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<sup>234</sup> Gareth Lloyd, *Charles Wesley and the Struggle for Methodist Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25.

<sup>235</sup> Lloyd, *Charles Wesley*, 25.

<sup>236</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 49-54.

to study for a career in the theatre, but, owing to a sense of despondency and isolation, he involved himself in the Holy Club and thence resolved to enter ordained ministry. He became one of the most ardent practitioners of this spirituality, throwing himself headlong into his studies and spiritual disciplines in an apparent attempt to “out-methodize the methodists.”<sup>238</sup>

In the year before Whitfield graduated and was ordained, the Wesley brothers set out with the support of the SPCK and SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) for the new colony of Georgia. Charles went to serve as Governor Oglethorpe’s secretary and John was to be a missionary, hoping to spread the Gospel among Georgia’s native population and European immigrants. The journey to Georgia is often highlighted in histories of the movement for good reason: John encountered a group of Moravians who were part of an effort to start a Colony in Georgia and it was their calm devotion in the face of a violent storm in which John feared desperately for his life that occasioned one of many crises of faith for the elder Wesley. While Charles served adequately in his position as secretary,<sup>239</sup> one would be hard pressed to argue for the success of John’s mission. Circumstances forced him to leave surreptitiously in December of 1737 as he faced potential legal action brought forward by some prominent settlers. Both brothers returned to England deeply dismayed and spiritually unmoored, feelings that certainly made them receptive to the spirituality that led to their 1738 conversions.

During this same time, the Revival within the Church of England had already begun, but it happened with little influence from the Oxford Methodist, and in Wales rather than England. The Welsh Church of England retained a tradition of more emotive oratory such that “the

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<sup>237</sup> Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1991), 3.

<sup>238</sup> Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 21.

<sup>239</sup> Although he felt it utterly unfulfilling and left after less than six months.

preaching of the Anglican Church in Wales can hardly be indicted for excessive and abstruse rationality.” In 1714 and 1718 a certain Rev. Griffin Jones even suffered the same kinds of accusations of undermining church order that the Wesleys would experience thirty years later.<sup>240</sup> Also, while it happened in the Church of England, the Welsh Revival, more so than the English, was not simply a clergy-initiated movement. Its beginnings are generally traced to Howell Harris’s 1735 conversion, and through the combined actions of Harris and his colleague Daniel Rowland, the curate of Llangeitho, a network of itinerant preaching and small group religious societies – both would characterize the larger evangelical movement – came into being.<sup>241</sup>

Between Whitfield’s ordination in the spring of 1736 and the field preaching in Bristol three years later that many mark as the true start of the English (or possibly better to say “Methodist”) Revival, several developments would set the stage for this coming event and contribute to the ideas, forms, styles, and conflicts that would inform the essential character of British evangelicalism for the rest of the century. Whitfield continued the work of the Oxford Methodists and regularly corresponded with the Wesleys during their time in Georgia. After returning to England, Charles visited Whitfield and convinced him of the need for missionary activity in North America. Whitfield resolved to embark on this missionary activity, but before leaving he ministered in London for a year, which afforded him the chance to develop his oratorical style. During this time he also experienced his conversion or “New Birth.”<sup>242</sup> This emphasis on the “New Birth” and regeneration, seen by Whitfield as profoundly affective

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<sup>240</sup> G. M. Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 49.

<sup>241</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 50.

<sup>242</sup> Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 35-8.

experiences, fueled the revivalist fervor with which he preached throughout Georgia.<sup>243</sup> Returning to London after this missionary effort, he became for a few years the face of Methodism, acting as much as the target of accusations of “enthusiasm” as the movement’s celebrity icon.<sup>244</sup> Whitfield then began his itinerant ministry, preaching in the “fields” around Bristol in early 1739.

When Charles returned to England he recommitted himself to the work of the now greatly enlarged Methodist societies. The revivalist foment he experienced and heard about in the work of Whitfield, other Oxford Methodists, and Harris also impressed him.<sup>245</sup> John returned a year later much more spiritually defeated than his brother. Having encountered the Moravians in Georgia, he continued his spiritual “apprenticeship” with the London-based minister Peter Böhler who was soon to be ordained as a Moravian by Zinzendorf. Böhler convinced John of the need for instantaneous conversion and a commitment to Justification by faith alone, and that there were no degrees of faith, but only belief and unbelief. While John’s position on these three points would evolve, they nevertheless remained part of his thought for the rest of his ministry. His experience with the London Moravians set the stage for the now-famous “Aldersgate experience” in which John “felt his heart strangely warmed” on May 24, 1738, just three days after Charles’s self-proclaimed conversion.<sup>246</sup>

But the peace accompanying instantaneous conversion did not last for John or Charles as they believed – and Böhler taught – it should. Ward goes as far as saying that one should not

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<sup>243</sup> See Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, ch. 4, 49-65. His missionary work helped rehabilitate the damage done there by the Wesleys to the Methodist name.

<sup>244</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 107.

<sup>245</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 83.

<sup>246</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 84-7.



locate Wesley's true conversion in the Aldersgate experience.<sup>247</sup> Instead, like his failure to become a precisionist that led to his failed Georgia mission, Aldersgate represents Wesley's failed attempt to become a Moravian:

If Wesley is compared with his contemporaries among the Inspired in the Rhineland, who understood Paul's injunction to be fervent in prayer quite literally to be boiling hot, or even with the wilder shores of enthusiasm at Herrnhag on which the Moravians were shortly to fetch up, his confession of a warmed heart is that of a rather cold fish whose pulse-rate (whether in religion or love) could not be got up to the point of letting himself go.<sup>248</sup>

After this less than satisfactory experience, John set out for Germany to meet with Zinzendorf and to sort out his theological experiences. The dissonance between what he felt as a real, if not entire, conversion and the Moravian hesitancy to accept its legitimacy led him to reevaluate his commitment to a strict Moravian theology.<sup>249</sup> Back in England, John reluctantly accepted an offer to take over from Whitfield in his field preaching in Bristol as Whitfield began to move into Wales.<sup>250</sup> This field preaching in Bristol on March 3, 1739 signaled the beginning of what would become the source of John Wesley's stable faith and ultimate ministerial calling: that of itinerant Revivalist preacher and leader-organizer of the ever-growing Methodist societies.<sup>251</sup>

While the growth and development of Methodism during the Wesleys' lifetime is interesting, a description of the most significant features of the movement for the larger evangelical revival will have to suffice for my argument. Throughout the Wesleys' ministry a constant, if not frequently conflictual, tension remained between John and Charles regarding the

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<sup>247</sup> A claim partially forwarded because of the central role that later Methodists would lay on this experience in interpreting Wesley's life as a pattern for other believers.

<sup>248</sup> W. Reginald Ward, *Early Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126.

<sup>249</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 96.

<sup>250</sup> John hesitated because of his firm commitment to the orderliness expected of a minister in the Church of England and even initially considered preaching outside of a church building potentially sacrilegious.

<sup>251</sup> Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 127.

degree to which Church of England discipline and order could be stretched.<sup>252</sup> Both brothers desired to remain within the bounds of Church of England order, but the movement, which acted more akin to a “para-church” organization to revive and support the Church of England, became increasingly independent of and a rival to the established church. Those Anglicans not directly involved in Methodism generally looked with suspicion or outright hostility on the movement, and from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a growing faction within Methodism itself desired that Wesley authorize lay ministers to administer the sacraments, if not to break from the Church of England entirely. Probably *the* critical moment in the drift away from the established church came when John Wesley ordained ministers and consecrated “superintendents” in 1784 for the Methodists in the newly independent United States, resulting in “Methodist independence [from Anglicanism] in the United States and de facto separation in Britain.”<sup>253</sup>

The other division within Methodism proper occurred much earlier and put a serious strain on the relationship between Whitfield and the Wesleys: the issue of predestination. The Wesleys were firmly committed to their own interpretation of Arminianism<sup>254</sup>, seeing the free offer of grace to all people and a corresponding capacity to receive that grace as part and parcel of true Christianity. They felt that the Calvinist doctrines of predestination and limited atonement

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<sup>252</sup> Charles remained the more conservative of the two in this regard, particularly regarding the use of lay preachers.

<sup>253</sup> Lloyd, *Charles Wesley*, 211. Because of the conflict during the 1780s and 90s between so-called “Church Methodists,” who wanted to remain within the Church of England, and those who favored independence, one cannot provide an exact date for when the Wesleyan Methodists began to exist as a dissenting body. After the 1795 “Plan of Pacification,” which intended to quell the conflict from this debate by giving each individual Methodist Chapel the authority to determine whether it would administer its own sacraments, the majority of Wesleyan Methodists left the Church of England and formed their own denominations. Out of this separation, the various dissenting Wesleyan Methodists would grow in number to more than 100,000 in 1800 and by 1851 there would be over 323,000 in Britain, giving them the distinction of becoming the largest Protestant body in Britain at the time (Lloyd, 225).

<sup>254</sup> I will soon explore how Wesleyan “Arminianism” differed both from the views of Jacobus Arminius and of non-evangelical 18<sup>th</sup> century Arminians.

undercut the message of God's love and led to antinomianism. This firm commitment would lead to a separation between the Wesleyan and Whitfieldian forms of Methodism.

After his conversion and missionary journey to Georgia, Whitfield came to his particular, almost exclusive, emphasis on highly emotive or even ecstatic experiences that accompanied the "New Birth."<sup>255</sup> While John would eventually give greater tolerance to the more ecstatic experiences among the Methodists, Charles, always the more cautious and establishment brother, remained "much more skeptical" of these outbursts, even going so far as to keep a "bucket of water in plain view" when preaching.<sup>256</sup> Even before the predestination or "Calvinist" controversy within Methodism, and even as John was accepting Whitfield's invitation to take on field preaching, tension was building between the more reserved and pro-establishment Wesleys and the more charismatic and independent Whitfield.

However, the real wedge between the Wesleys and Whitfield came shortly after John had taken up Whitfield's call to itineracy in 1739. While Whitfield had not been exposed to Calvinism early on (and likely read very little Jean Calvin in his life), he became open to a more thoroughgoing Calvinism in his Welsh preaching tour, as an aggressive commitment to predestination permeated the Welsh and east English revival, with those committed to this doctrine often hostile to Wesleyan Arminianism.<sup>257</sup> In late 1739, Whitfield returned to the American Colonies for a preaching tour that took him from Pennsylvania to New York and again to Georgia. His experience of the Revival in America strengthened his preexisting openness both to "irregularity" and Calvinism: "If Whitfield's ministry was ecumenical, it was an all-inclusive

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<sup>255</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 368.

<sup>256</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 369.

<sup>257</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 370.

ecumenicity that was explicitly ‘Calvinist’ in theology and opposed to all forms of ‘Arminianism.’ In fact, Whitfield’s Calvinism and anti-Arminianism became more and more strident as he traveled through Calvinist America and Scotland.”<sup>258</sup> While Whitfield was in America, John Wesley found that a growing number of members of his societies were increasingly hostile to his teaching God’s universal offer of salvation, and this prompted a harsh rebuttal against Calvinism.<sup>259</sup> Whitfield responded with a letter in which he enjoined Wesley to avoid completely the topic of election in his preaching. This conflict culminated in a face to face meeting between John and Whitfield upon Whitfield’s return and ultimately a schism in the Kingswood society.<sup>260</sup> The Wesleys and Whitfield from that time parted ways in their ministries, and, while always remaining courteous to each other, Whitfield would occasionally “upbraid John Wesley” during his distinct ministry.<sup>261</sup>

The various overlapping evangelical movements could often go in opposite institutional directions. If one looks at the Wesleys, one sees a constant conflict between a desire to reform the Church of England and to stay within what they saw as acceptable boundaries, with John more willing to push these boundaries than Charles. On the other hand, Whitfield, while also a clergyman in the Church of England, had a greater sympathy for dissent and fewer problems with ignoring proper church order. There is a certain irony in the fact that Wesleyan Methodism would become the largest dissenting movement, and Wesleyan Arminianism proved more influential on the emerging dissenting evangelical traditions not explicitly part of Wesley’s

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<sup>258</sup> Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 95.

<sup>259</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 371. The Calvinism John attacked was something of a straw man, being the hyper-Calvinism of John Gill and generally not a fair representation of what was being put forward by those in the revival.

<sup>260</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 371-2.

<sup>261</sup> Rupp, *Religion*, 372. Nevertheless, before his death, Whitfield and John would repair their damaged friendship.

Connexion. Likewise, while Whitfield explicitly encouraged the earliest departures from the Church of England, he exerted a greater theological influence on, or at least resonated theologically much more with, the non-Methodist evangelicals in the Church of England who would become increasingly identified with the Evangelical party.

Divisions along social and economic class lines partially explain these divergent ecclesiological trajectories. The Wesley's inherited from their middle-class family a strong distaste for the wealthy and the aristocratic, and their movement focused on extensive work among the poor.<sup>262</sup> Whitfield did not share this same distaste for the economic or social elite, and he saw great potential for extending his ministerial capacity by working with those of means.<sup>263</sup>

We now arrive at a personality who stood at the intersection of these opposing forces, and who helped lay the groundwork for the soon-to-emerge Evangelical party in the Church of England even as she formed one of the first independent evangelical communities: Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. Selina's peerage allowed her to appoint chaplains and thus support several evangelical leaders such as Whitfield, Henry Venn, and William Romaine.<sup>264</sup> Whitfield's theological influence on Selina, who already inclined toward Calvinism, helped ensure the strength of Calvinism among Anglican Evangelicals. She also created an organizational network and college at Trevecca which gave greater cohesion to what was initially a group of like-minded, but isolated and disparate, regular clergy whose "structure" could not match the

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<sup>262</sup> A demographic focus that did not allay elite fears that Methodists were igniting and fanning the flames of fanaticism among those who were (in their eyes) superstitious, impressionable, and uneducated.

<sup>263</sup> Anthony Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* (London: University of London Press, 1973), 123.

<sup>264</sup> Armstrong, *Church of England and Society*, 124.

organizational prowess of the Wesleyan societies. Finally, her patronage and work with other elites helped to make evangelical thought acceptable among “respectable society.”<sup>265</sup>

“Parties,” in the post-Tractarian sense of well-defined ecclesial factions did not really exist in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, whose people saw them as breeding grounds for division and sectarianism. One can nevertheless still distinguish tendencies in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Church that one could conceive of as “proto-parties.” Thus, while talk about the “Evangelical” party in the Church of England during the early revival would be idiosyncratic, I still feel comfortable talking about “early Anglican Evangelicals” in the sense of those Anglicans influenced by the evangelical revival who remained nevertheless only peripherally associated with the Methodist movements or even viewed them with suspicion. The early figures in what would become Anglican Evangelicalism sometimes experienced their conversion after contact with Oxford Methodism or revivalists such as Wesley and Whitefield, but they often occurred during the larger wave of conversions in the 1720s and 30s of which the early Methodists were only one part. Many prominent figures claimed by the Anglican Evangelicals were part of this group of independent conversions, including George Thompson, James Harvey, Vincent Perronet, William Romaine, and Henry Venn. Among these, Vincent Perronet was “ten years older than John Wesley, converted independently of him and did not meet him for the first time until 1744.”<sup>266</sup> Similarly, “William Romaine (1714-95), though an undergraduate at Wesley’s former Oxford college, did not associate with the Holy Club and only converted subsequently.”<sup>267</sup> An important transitional figure from the earliest forms of evangelical revival to the second generation of those like

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<sup>265</sup> Armstrong, *Church of England and Society*, 124.

<sup>266</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 47.

<sup>267</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 47.

Wilberforce and Hannah More was John Newton, the former slave captain turned Church of England Clergyman. He was established at Olney in 1764 – an insignificant parish at the time, but important in our history because the poet and hymn-writer William Cowper, who would importantly influence the young Coleridge, was from Olney.<sup>268</sup>

By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, “regular” evangelical clergy in the Church of England remained a relatively marginal group both in the Revival and the Church.<sup>269</sup> Despite remaining within the bounds of Anglican parochial order, this group of evangelicals still “had a somewhat uncertain status in terms of legality” – or at least legitimacy in the eyes of those holding ecclesial power.<sup>270</sup> “Evangelical parish clergymen in the Church of England, of course, were free to pursue their own style of preaching and pastoral work, although they were unlikely to receive promotion to the highest ecclesial rank.”<sup>271</sup> The common assumption that evangelical thought and practice were “enthusiasm” played some role in marginalizing these clergy, but parochial Evangelicals also suffered from an association with the itinerant Methodists’ “irregularity” and

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<sup>268</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: the Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 159-60.

<sup>269</sup> One must be careful how much one distinguishes between clearly “Methodist” Anglicans and anti-Methodist, but still evangelical, clergy, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As the century went on, there were certainly those who stood at greater or lesser distances from the Wesleys or Whitefield, but Methodist affiliation for these clergy could be fluid. Attempting to separate “Methodist”-affiliated clergy from “proto-evangelical” parish clergy owes more to the later Victorian Evangelical attempt to trace an Evangelical origin distinct from that of the Methodists and other dissenting evangelicals than to actual 18<sup>th</sup> century divisions. As Mark Noll points out, “such properly ordained clergy were usually friendly with Methodists of several varieties; until the 1790s there was, in fact, no hard-and-fast barrier between them and the Methodists, except that they insisted on carrying on the regular work of clergy within the parish” (*Rise of Evangelicalism*, 161). One prominent feature of many of these early clergy (as was also the case with the Wesleys early in their career) was an association with the Moravian movement, who under Zinzendorf did not establish a separate church in England and put their societies under the authority of appropriate Anglican bishops. This influence and association between the Moravians and the Evangelicals diminished in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century after the crisis that occurred among the German Moravians then under Zinzendorf and ensuing claims of financial mismanagement and sexual irregularities began to arrive in England from the continent. The Moravians would become a much smaller movement in terms of influence (and go on to become a separate Dissenting church), but their reputation would begin to recover in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century (Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 160-1).

<sup>270</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 78.

<sup>271</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 78.

the perceived (or real) threat it posed to proper church order. However, with the aid of influential laity, like the Countess of Huntingdon, evangelical thought within the Church of England gradually became more respectable and acceptable. Evangelical clergy also worked to extend the influence of evangelicalism within the Church. John Newton, for instance, “became a trusted confidant to several distinguished Anglican leaders, both lay and clerical,” including Charles Simeon, the influential moralist Hannah More, and M.P. William Wilberforce.<sup>272</sup>

From the 1770s, pressure on pro-evangelical Anglican clergy to decide between remaining in the Church of England or associating with emerging dissenting movements quickly mounted. As many Wesleyan Methodists rapidly disconnected from the Church in the 1780s and 90s, explicit shows of allegiance in one direction or the other became that much more necessary. The period of the French Revolution and then the early part of the Napoleonic Wars further challenged the ease of Evangelical growth in the Church of England. Both dissenting and Anglican evangelicals were suspected of Jacobin sympathies and involvement in political subversion.<sup>273</sup> At the same time, despite the strong push for moral and social reform (including abolition of the slave trade), many prominent Tory politicians associated themselves with the Evangelicals, and Evangelical clergy after the French Revolution were “overwhelmingly Tory.”<sup>274</sup> While Evangelicals were more apt than other conservatives to support toleration, their general adherence to orthodox theological positions allowed them to grow in influence and prominence as the liberal/Latitudinarian strain came under greater and greater scrutiny.

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<sup>272</sup> Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 198.

<sup>273</sup> This was in part because of the association of rational dissent and some Methodists with radical politics during the revolutionary era, as well as the association between evangelical thought and the Puritanism that was still strongly connected to regicide and the political upheaval of the English Civil War in the minds of many.

<sup>274</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 73.



One can fairly distinguish a second generation of British evangelicalism running from the 1790s until the early 1830s.<sup>275</sup> This is the same period in which Coleridge came of age and lived his adult life, so the character of the evangelicalism of this period is particularly important for this argument since this was the form with which Coleridge would have interacted. This period saw greater internal consolidation within individual forms of evangelicalism as increasing inter-group competition led to greater differentiation between groups, a phenomenon mirrored in the consolidation within Anglican High Churchmanship as it competed with the Evangelicals. This meant on the one hand that Anglicans sought to secure the title to being (the) authentic evangelicalism:

The alarming growth of Methodism and evangelical Nonconformity in the 1790s seemed to threaten the future of the Established Church: if Dissent continued to expand at this rate, would the Church not soon be a vulnerable minority institution like her offspring the Church of Ireland? Many Evangelicals now felt guilty at the way in which the irregularity of their own colleagues had encouraged s this upsurge in Dissent Too many of those who had been converted by irregular preaching had joined Dissent rather than the Church.<sup>276</sup>

A lesser but still real challenge came from non-Evangelical (generally High Church but also some liberal) Anglicans, who claimed that any evangelicalism was inherently incompatible with Anglicanism and undermined the established Church.<sup>277</sup> The growing power of evangelical Nonconformity certainly did little to help discount these views in the eyes of the Evangelical's

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<sup>275</sup> This period marks the time between the deaths of Whitfield and the Wesleys (John, the last of the three, died in 1791) until the deaths of "Robert Hall, Adam Clarke, William Wilberforce, Hannah Moore, Rowland Hill and Charles Simeon," who "all died between 1831 and 1836" (Bebbington, 75).

<sup>276</sup> Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800-1850* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.

<sup>277</sup> It is worth noting that this opposition from the High Church was not nearly as strong as the fear of Nonconformity. However, as the Evangelicals became more organized and grew in power, it does seem that there was a High Church fear, motivated less by theological disagreement and more from a desire to maintain ecclesial power, of the Evangelicals' influence. This fear increased tensions between the groups in the years leading up to 1820 and there were even some who came close to "supporting a policy, in general not taken up, of seeking to drive Evangelicals out of the Church of England" (Nockles, "Church Parties," 354). This group proved in some ways more combative than even the Tractarians, since the Tractarians would call into question the orthodoxy of Evangelical belief, but not the underlying motives for that belief.

detractors. These two forces helped bring about a moderated form of evangelicalism that simultaneously claimed it was the true (or truer) form of Christianity against the irregularities and doctrinal “particularities” imputed to the Nonconformists while it was also the true heir of *the* authentic, and Reformation, character of the Church of England.

Before this second generation of more moderate Evangelicalism came to an end, the pendulum swung in the other direction as an internal rift developed in the 1820s between those committed to this moderate form and those with features often associated with contemporary evangelicalism. This more radical movement emphasized prophetic utterances, millenarianism (as well as a pivot toward Premillennialism), a significantly narrower view of biblical inspiration, and an essential biblical literalism.<sup>278</sup> I will explore the specifics of this doctrinal shift in greater detail in the following section, since some of Coleridge’s positions could be seen as attempts to shore up the more moderate Evangelical position against the radicalism emerging at the end of his life.

An explanation of evangelicalism’s influence on dissenting traditions is the last historical point I will consider before focusing on the characteristic features of the movement. We have already seen that despite the (Nonconformist) expectation that Nonconformity would serve as the fertile ground from which a revival would spring, revival instead largely originated within the Church of England. Second, the great exodus of Methodists at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century greatly increased the power of Nonconformity going into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, Methodism’s becoming a dissenting group and subsequent expansion was not the only significant change the revival brought to British nonconforming churches. As Noll explains, “With energy from Moravianism and the converts of Whitfield, a quickening of faith among Baptists and

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<sup>278</sup> See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 81-9.

Independents, a significant stimulus from America and a wholesale borrowing from the Methodists (especially itinerary), Nonconformity entered a period of dynamic evangelical expansion.<sup>279</sup> While the themes of the revival first influenced newly created Baptist bodies and other forms of so-called “New Dissent,”<sup>280</sup> evangelicalism would eventually touch almost all dissenting groups in Britain, with the exception of rational Dissenters such as the Unitarians.<sup>281</sup>

I can now turn to identifying the matrix of theological thinking, communication style, and social and cultural markers, that together distinguished “evangelicalism” from other long 18<sup>th</sup> century religious traditions, as well as those differences that acted as boundary markers for the various forms of evangelicalism. Before proceeding, I need to clarify how my method of analysis departs from other approaches to 18<sup>th</sup> century British evangelicalism. For several reasons already identified in the first chapter, early evangelicalism has often been treated as more of a social and cultural phenomenon that is weak on theology or doctrinal formulation.<sup>282</sup> However, W. Reginald Ward has brought attention to the characteristics of “top-drawer” evangelicalism and in

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<sup>279</sup> Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 206.

<sup>280</sup> While the Baptist tradition in general would be classified as “Old Dissent,” having roots that predate the English Civil War, the Revival created conditions for Baptist groups that should be properly classed as New Dissent, being formed in response to the Revival (and, in the case of the New Baptist Connexion, led by former Methodists). Thus, these “evangelical” Baptists, as newly created institutional bodies, stand in a relationship like that of the Unitarians to the Presbyterians and Independents.

<sup>281</sup> Unitarians often looked disparagingly upon evangelicalism, not only for the standard accusations of “enthusiasm,” but also because it tended, in their eyes, to appeal to too low of a social and economic caste.

<sup>282</sup> I make this point as a way of explaining why I depart from the definitional framework for British evangelicalism given by David Bebbington, which serves as the foundation for so many scholars who work in this field. Bebbington identifies four emphases that together distinguish evangelicalism as a movement: “conversionism,” “activism,” “biblicism,” and “crucicentrism” (Bebbington, 3). Most scholars of British evangelicalism, including those who focus on only the period considered here, use this framework or some modified version of it (see Ditchfield, 26). However, while I do break with this convention, I am not attempting an iconoclastic reading that upsets Bebbington’s authority. Bebbington’s project sought, successfully I believe, to find those identifying markers that distinguish a phenomenon of “British evangelicalism” from the diversity of explicit theological formulations and popular manifestations over a span of 150 years. I only challenge the attempt to say that the best set of identifying markers for the whole are equally valuable for identifying the emphases of a part of the movement. Bebbington’s analysis of evangelicalism in its various manifestations still provides vital information about the movement, so I still make copious use of his work even if I do not apply his larger heuristic.

so doing has attempted to dispel conventional assumptions about evangelicalism as *essentially* a non- or anti-intellectual movement. He argues instead that evangelicalism, particularly in its early forms, had its own intellectual elite who contributed in consequential ways to the development of modernity, even if they have not received the same accolades as “Enlightenment” thinkers. It is the contention of this entire project that Coleridge would also need to be counted among this tier of thinkers, so this analysis of the distinguishing features of evangelicalism will focus on the forms put forward by the movement’s intellectual architects.<sup>283</sup>

Evangelicalism (both as a larger movement and as a specific party in the Church of England) represented the other half of the broadly “orthodox” approach discussed in the last chapter in the sense that they offered a more robust and “conservative” approach to Christian doctrine than the liberals/Latitudinarians. A list of the bare doctrines held by evangelicals and the High Churchmen in the long 18<sup>th</sup> century would be almost identical. However, this does not mean that these two groups thought exactly the same way about God and the world and differed merely on points of rhetoric/style/practice. Rather, evangelicals emphasized different doctrines than High Church Anglicans and frequently interpreted them differently as well: It was not doctrines such as justification by faith, original sin, or the need for repentance “*per se* but the Evangelical interpretation or gloss of them which the Orthodox tended to dispute.”<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Ward provides a “hexagon” of “themes” that characterize the thought of top-tier early evangelical intellectuals. These were “the close association with mysticism, the small-group religion, the deferred eschatology, the experimental approach to conversion, anti-Aristotelianism and hostility to theological system, and the attempt to reinforce religious vitality by it in the context of a vitalist understanding of nature” (Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 4). Ward’s explicit analysis is – by his own admission – limited because it sees the high point of evangelical intellectual activity and cohesion in its first generation (roughly 1690-1790). After this, he sees a decline in the quality of thought, and a “fragmentation of their common corpus of doctrine” (Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 4). It is unclear whether his full-scale appraisal of the “decline” of evangelical intellectualism is truly accurate, and whether the fragmentation that he speaks of was an internal failure rather than coming from diverging national intellectual pressures. If I am correct and figures like Coleridge constitute a second generation of this top-tier evangelical intellectual tradition, then the narrative of decline is a misunderstanding, and it may be that the hexagon did not so much fragment as evolve. However, that must be a question for later work.

<sup>284</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 343.

This observation does not mean that these two groups differed on their interpretation of *every* doctrine. A significant orthodox consensus existed for the interpretation of “speculative” doctrines, such as the Trinity or the incarnation (although not the atonement). However, while holding that these doctrines were important and should generally be accepted as true, evangelicals did not see intellectual assent to them as *central* to the life of faith. For evangelicals “faith” was less a matter of assent to doctrinal propositions (where doubt would be the contrary of faith) and more of the nature of one’s relationship and affective disposition toward God (where concern would be less with intellectual belief or unbelief and more about a “living/active/practical” faith vs. a “dead/cold/abstract” faith). Assenting to properly formulated understandings of, say, the divinity of Christ or the nature of the Trinity would be less important to the evangelical than a proper disposition of praise and thanksgiving toward that God.

John Wesley clearly indicates that for him “practical atheism” posed a much greater threat to Christianity than true intellectual doubt about the existence of God. In his sermon “On Living without God,” Wesley asserted that he “could not find twenty who seriously disbelieved the being of God; nay I have found only two of these (to the best of judgement) in the British Islands.”<sup>285</sup> Rather, the threat comes from those who accept the proposition *that* God exists, but who nevertheless “have not God in all their thoughts; such as have not acquainted themselves with him, neither have any fellowship with him; such as have no more intercourse with God, or the invisible world, than the animal had with the visible.”<sup>286</sup> From the point of view of what constitutes a true and living faith, stopping at assent to propositions about the existence of God proves no better than denying these beliefs.

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<sup>285</sup> John Wesley, Sermon 125, “On Living without God” in *Sermons 4*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 4 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1976- ).

<sup>286</sup> Wesley, “On Living without God,” in *Works*, 4.

While Wesley did not consider them the same, he did see faith as intimately connected with love of God, which meant relationship with God. Wesley distinguishes between justification (forgiveness of sins) and sanctification (growth in inner holiness, meaning growth in love of God and neighbor), but he says that faith is the necessary and only condition for both justification and sanctification. One can infer then that “faith” which does not lead to growth in love of God and neighbor is not faith.<sup>287</sup> Wesley clearly distinguishes between a kind of knowledge of God that even practical Atheists have and that kind that those who are truly saved by faith have in his sermon “On Original Sin”: “From the things that are seen we inferred the existence of an eternal, powerful Being, that is not seen. But still, although we acknowledged his being we had no acquaintance with him. As we know there is an Emperor of China, whom yet we do not know; so, we knew there was a King of all the earth, yet we knew him not.” That evangelicals wanted a stronger connection between faith and love or faith and relationship proves vitally important for our study of Coleridge, since he will go even further in conjoining them by making them only analytically distinct facets of one act or state of being.

Beyond this distinctive conception of faith, early evangelicals strongly emphasized the reality and fundamentally corrupting effects of original sin. Adherence to and emphasis of this doctrine would not necessarily have distinguished evangelicals from their High Church contemporaries, but it certainly distinguished them from Deists and other strong rationalists who saw Christ as nothing more than a teacher and moral exemplar. It would have also differentiated evangelicals from the many Latitudinarians who, despite generally affirming the doctrine, held that human nature remains fundamentally good. Instead, evangelicals saw original sin as utterly corrupting human nature, such that “there is nothing [humans] can do by themselves to win

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<sup>287</sup> See for instance Wesley’s Sermon 5, “Justification by Faith,” *Works*, 1, or his most thorough and mature treatment of his understanding of the life of faith, Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” *Works*, 2.

salvation. All human actions, even good works, are tainted by sin, and so there is no possibility of gaining merit in the sight of God. Hence, salvation has to be received, not achieved.”<sup>288</sup>

Intimately connected with their view of original sin was the centrality of salvation by faith alone for evangelical belief. Evangelicals would never see salvation as something achieved through human activity, even if such an inherent capacity required God’s assistance, but only ever something given through God’s gracious activity and Christ’s death on the cross. This fully gratuitous offer of restored relationship also implied inner transformation, understood as regeneration or growth in holiness.<sup>289</sup>

Key to the evangelical conception of the *ordo salutis* is the subjective nature both of the acceptance of the offer of salvific grace and of regeneration. Conversion, often understood as repentance and a desire to receive full pardon for one’s sins followed by the “New Birth,” was essential. One can see that salvation by faith alone *and* the acceptance of saving grace in a conversion experience were cornerstones of evangelical thought in Wesley’s viewing “the ‘grand scriptural doctrines’ uniting the Evangelical clergy as original sin, justification, and the new birth.”<sup>290</sup> The expectation of personal conversion, and particularly use of language of the “New Birth” proved almost exclusively the domain of the evangelicals in Britain during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it was certainly not a new doctrine at the outbreak of the Revival. Earlier stages of the larger evangelical revival in the form of German pietism were already emphasizing

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<sup>288</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 6.

<sup>289</sup> Ted A. Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs: Formal and Popular Expressions of the Core Beliefs of Wesleyan Communities* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2010), 84. One of the major debates between the Wesleyan and Calvinist evangelical traditions regarded the nature of this transformation. Wesley of course believed in the possibility of Christian perfection in this life, understood as having all inclination to sin completely rooted out, and this was generally rejected by most non-Wesleyan evangelicals. However, both traditions believed that some inner transformation and development in the direction of full sanctification occurred in this life.

<sup>290</sup> Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs*, 76.

a conversion that included repenting of a life of sin and new birth in the Spirit. While opposed on certain theological points, both the Moravians and Halle Pietists influenced the developing theologies of the Wesleys. Philip Jacob Spener, whose *Pia Desidera* was an influential early treatise in German Pietism, urged “the need for repentance, the new birth, putting faith into action and close fellowship among true believers.”<sup>291</sup> Nor was the doctrine without precedent in British thought. Nonconformists, and before them Puritans, made conversion central to faith.

The novelty in the evangelical<sup>292</sup> understanding of conversion and New Birth compared with that of the Puritans was the nature of subjectively perceptible inner transformation that they understood conversion to entail. Prior to the revival, conversion was understood as

the acknowledgement or recognition of regeneration as a new spiritual and ontological status. Where once sinners had stood alienated from God, after the New Birth they took on the mantle of Christ and became – *in God’s eyes* – new creatures. Left unspecified in Puritan sermons was whether and to what extent the new creatures became new in their own eyes. Personal experience was subordinated to considerations of the new status before God. It mattered less that individuals *felt* this new position before God than that they understood what had happened in the spiritual realm and responded appropriately to that new status with appropriate acts of praise and thanksgiving.<sup>293</sup>

Evangelicals maintained the importance of the change in status in God’s eyes, but this form of change describes their understanding of justification. The New Birth became almost fully associated with an accompanying subjective change in the believer. For instance, for George Whitfield, “the new creation of which he spoke was not a ‘mere metaphor’; it was as self-evident and palpable as a ‘tasteless palate’ suddenly brought alive at a sumptuous feast.”<sup>294</sup> This actual change affected not only the understanding, although one must also believe oneself forgiven, but also the affections as one experienced joy and gratitude at God’s saving work.

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<sup>291</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 39.

<sup>292</sup> Here the term is used broadly to include both its late 17<sup>th</sup> century Pietist and American revivalist forms.

<sup>293</sup> Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 38.

<sup>294</sup> Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 39.



That this shift occurred in nearly every form of evangelicalism does not mean that evangelicals had a monolithic understanding of the New Birth and its effects, but rather that debates now centered on precisely how to understand these subjective effects. An important question about the New Birth was the degree to which internal affective states required outward emotive displays. The role of these displays ran the gamut from being a necessary mark of true conversion, to being acceptable but often needing further scrutiny, to deserving suspicion. On the side of holding to the necessity or near necessity of strong outward displays stood someone like George Whitfield, who developed a highly theatrical (although this does not necessarily mean disingenuous) form of preaching that fused “tears, passions, and consolation,” and in which he made use of a voice that “was often likened to ‘the roar of a lion.’”<sup>295</sup> On the other end of the spectrum stood those like Charles Wesley and many of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican Evangelicals who strongly resisted these external displays of affection.<sup>296</sup>

One should note the way in which these doctrinal emphases and interpretations gave evangelicalism a distinctive character against the backdrop of the dominant theological mood of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Deists, Socinians, Arians, and Latitudinarians saw a close connection between justification and salvation, and one earned these by striving to do good works. They had a highly transactional view of salvation whereby either the joys and pleasures of heaven were the reward for living a properly moral life, or, in the case of many Latitudinarians, virtue produced a good life in this world that was its own reward. Human nature, weakened by sin, may still need the aid of God’s grace either to allow for a relaxed standard of moral rigor by offering forgiveness when

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<sup>295</sup> Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, 42.

<sup>296</sup> As evident by the earlier description of Charles’s keeping a bucket of cold water on hand while preaching to remind his hearers to cool their passionate outbursts, one assumes mainly by way of threat of dousing, although it is possible that he would not have hesitated to actually employ the water if the occasion called for it.

the strict standards of the law could not be fulfilled or to reveal/republish the fullness of the moral law (or both). Evangelicals, on the other hand, emphasized that holiness resulted from a restored human nature after justification/New Birth. Holiness was essential in the life of salvation rather than a prerequisite to it. Furthermore, evangelicals differed from Latitudinarians in seeing holiness as including the inner transformation of human will away from the inclination to sin and towards the love of God, and not as just a greater capacity for moral action.

William Wilberforce wrote that “made at first in the likeness of God, and still boarding about some faint traces of our high original, we are offered by our blessed Redeemer the means of purification from our corruptions, and of once more regaining the image of our Heavenly Father.”<sup>297</sup> Our inclinations become “love, the compendious expression for almost every virtue, in fortitude under all its forms, in justice, in humility, and in all the other graces of the Christian character, we are made capable of attaining to heights of real elevation.”<sup>298</sup> John Wesley similarly held that the goal of Christian life, and the content of salvation, was transformation into the image of God as our wills turn from an inclination to sin to the love of God and, consequently, love of neighbor. Wesley stated that “full salvation from all our sins” is “perfect love” or “love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul.”<sup>299</sup> On the journey to entire sanctification, “we are more and more dead to sin” and “more and more alive to God.”<sup>300</sup>

Furthermore, the goal or reward of salvation is intrinsic in the means of accomplishing it, rather than an arbitrary addition inducing humans to moral behavior: the goal is the restored

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<sup>297</sup> William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes of this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity* (London: T. Cadell, 1797), ch. 5.

<sup>298</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, ch. 5.

<sup>299</sup> Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” §9, in *Works*, 2.

<sup>300</sup> Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” §8, in *Works*, 2.

relationship with God for which we were originally created. One can see this ultimate end of human life expressed in the hymns that communicated as much evangelical theology as did their sermons and doctrinal/polemical tracts. The theme of the joy of heaven repeatedly comes out, but rather than being a joy of continued earthly pleasure, it is the unrestrained praise and worship of God. Charles Wesley presented the hope for heaven as full communion with God:

2 Come, almighty, to deliver,  
let us all thy grace receive;  
Suddenly return, and never,  
Never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve thee as thy hosts above,  
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
Glory in thy perfect love.

3 Finish then, thy new creation,  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in thee:  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before thee,  
Lost in wonder, love and praise.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Charles Wesley, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," 374, in *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1780), in *Works*, 7:545-6.

This understanding could be found in hymns from other branches of the evangelical revival. For instance, Cennick identifies Jesus as the way to *and* the destination of the Christian life:

Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,  
He whom I fix my hopes upon;  
His track I see, and I'll pursue  
The narrow way, till Him I view.  
The way the holy prophets went,  
The road that leads from banishment,  
The King's highway of holiness,  
I'll go, for all His paths are peace.<sup>302</sup>

Similarly, the final verse of "Amazing Grace" by John Newton emphasizes the goal of human existence as restored relationship with God:

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God who called me here below,  
will be forever mine.

It would be easy to try to distinguish the evangelical from the non-evangelical visions of salvation as something that begins in this life and is consummated in the next rather than seeing salvation as securing continued pleasure and avoiding pains in a future life. This characterization has some truth to it, but it fails to get to the heart of the difference between these visions.

Latitudinarians could easily play down the future life and understand the pleasures of *this* mortal life as sufficient reward and as the goal of Christianity. Thus, the main distinguishing feature was

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<sup>302</sup> Cennick, "Jesus my all to heaven is gone," quoted in Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 278.

instead God's role in the plan of salvation. For the non-evangelical, one's standing before God generally serves an instrumental purpose. God provides the means for securing reward and avoiding punishment. For the evangelical, God both provides the means of salvation and its end. The emphases and anthropology prominent in non-evangelical thought focused on the end of human life as pleasure and avoidance of pain, and right relationship with God (understood primarily as obedience to God's moral command) as the means of achieving that goal. The evangelical would have understood right relationship with God as the goal of human existence; joy/pleasure/happiness are a consequence of right relationship and pain/punishment are a consequence of disordered relationship.

By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the High Church tradition had also frequently come to view justification as requiring both faith and works. Even the Hutchinsonians, who among the High Churchmen appeared the most "evangelical" in their devotional piety,<sup>303</sup> "remained identified with the later Caroline emphasis on 'Justification by works' as well as faith."<sup>304</sup> However, the nature of Baptism and its connection to regeneration served as a more reliable theological dividing line between evangelicals and the High Churchmen. Evangelicals could maintain a range of views regarding the relationship between Baptism and spiritual regeneration. More thorough-going Calvinists "denied baptismal regeneration outright as unscriptural" and "regarded baptism as little more than an initiation into the visible church," although some could concede with Thomas Scott that "baptism was at least a sign of regeneration as laid down in Article 23."<sup>305</sup> There were, however, moderate Evangelicals who believed in the possibility of

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<sup>303</sup> As well as having a close association with Oxford Methodism.

<sup>304</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 258.

<sup>305</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 229.

some regenerative grace often accompanying Baptism, but they would also affirm that “the grace of spiritual regeneration could often be separated from the sacrament of baptism.”<sup>306</sup>

Separating regenerative grace from Baptism, either necessarily or potentially, constituted a line in the sand between evangelicals and High Churchmen. From the evangelical side, the problem with the High Church position was that it made the sacrament the “sole and exclusive instrument of the new birth.”<sup>307</sup> For Evangelicals, the High Church position implied “two justifications, the first linked directly to baptism and the second to the final judgement,” despite any High Church objections to the contrary.<sup>308</sup> From the High Church side, *any* separation of regenerative grace and Baptism meant both “a rejection of the spiritual prerogatives of priesthood” and the attempt to “deny or explain away and qualify a doctrine enshrined in the Prayer Book.”<sup>309</sup> For a tradition that so closely linked salvation and proper church order, the explicit or implicit denial of a “proper” understanding of baptismal regeneration strongly supported the High Church accusation that the Evangelicals preached a “‘mutilated sketch’ of what they regarded as the whole Gospel.”<sup>310</sup>

The view of salvation sketched here primarily distinguished the evangelicals theologically from every other tradition in the long 18<sup>th</sup> century. These doctrines also dictated a particular evangelical method for interpreting and prioritizing other doctrines. The evangelical focus on the Holy Spirit’s role in the Christian life flowed naturally from an emphasis not only on salvation by grace through faith generally, but also specifically on the doctrine’s subjective

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<sup>306</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 230.

<sup>307</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 230.

<sup>308</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 343.

<sup>309</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 230-1.

<sup>310</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 343.

dimensions, i.e., the movement's characteristic "conversionism." Many in the larger trans-Atlantic revival framed the entire movement as an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jonathan Edwards stated that "from the fall of man to this day wherein we live the Work of Redemption in its effects has mainly been carried on by remarkable pourings out of the Spirit of God."<sup>311</sup> Similarly, the Anglican school master Joseph Milner indicated that the revival resulted from an "effusion" of the Holy Spirit.<sup>312</sup>

If the Holy Spirit's work had a central place in evangelical thought, it was also something that those outside the movement looked at with the most suspicion. Fear for the implications of this doctrine was not limited to those outside the movement; evangelicals themselves could see this emphasis as highly susceptible to misunderstanding and misuse, thus needing the greatest scrutiny. Many 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers saw evangelical pretensions to special outpourings or revelations from the Holy Spirit as one of the main signs that evangelicalism bred enthusiasm and fanaticism – and some fringe movements within the revival certainly did nothing to alleviate these fears.<sup>313</sup> As a result, leaders of the evangelical movement constantly sought to put limits on the most extravagant and ecstatic claims to inspiration. For mainstream evangelicals, real manifestations of Spirit had to conform to the witness of Scripture; anything that did not rightfully deserved condemnation as "enthusiasm."

An emphasis on the atonement also flowed from this evangelical understanding of salvation, and in particular a view of the atonement that entailed Christ's full divinity. Few in the

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<sup>311</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *History of the Works of Redemption*, quoted in Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 138.

<sup>312</sup> Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 139.

<sup>313</sup> One need look no further than the example of the perfectionist controversy that occurred in Wesleyan Methodism in the 1760s, in which figures like George Bell claimed to have received complete perfection and freedom from sin. Differing from Wesley, though, Bell understood this to mean that *anything* he did was no longer sinful, not that he ceased from doing sinful acts or having sinful inclinations (Heitzenrater, 234-6).

movement would deny that Jesus serves as a moral exemplar, but this exemplary function could not be the primary aspect of his work.<sup>314</sup> Human beings, fully estranged from God because of the all-encompassing effects of original sin, require far more than a reduplication of the moral law or gracious assistance to shore up defects in our moral capabilities; human beings need a mediator to remove the guilt of sin and to restore a human nature deformed by the effects of sin. Thus, Christ's death on the cross as the completion or even totality of Christ's atoning work, usually understood in substitutionary terms, was inseparable from evangelical conceptions of true Christianity.<sup>315</sup> Images of salvation through Christ's blood shed on the cross and Christ as the sacrificial lamb filled evangelical hymns and sermons.<sup>316</sup> John Wesley understood the atonement as *the* litmus test for true Christianity: "Indeed, nothing in the Christian system is of greater consequence than the doctrine of the Atonement. It is properly the distinguishing point between Deism and Christianity... Give up the Atonement, and the Deists are agreed with us."<sup>317</sup>

The importance of the atonement provides an interesting insight into the theological character of the movement: It actually shared the larger 18<sup>th</sup> century's hostility to "abstract" metaphysical speculation and a prejudice toward the "practical" dimensions of theory. Therefore, evangelicals attempted, sometimes vigorously, to demonstrate that their thought was conducive to good moral behavior and social orderliness. However, a distinctive dimension of evangelical "practicality" meant something more like a prejudice toward the "pastoral" importance of doctrine, i.e., a doctrine's importance, as well as how it was interpreted, was judged according to

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<sup>314</sup> And evangelicals rejected all that much more any understanding of Christ's work and purpose as *exclusively* that of moral exemplar.

<sup>315</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 14-17.

<sup>316</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 27. The Moravians saw this as so central to their teaching that the lamb became the emblem of their movement as well as featuring prominently in so many of their hymns.

<sup>317</sup> Letter from John Wesley to Mary Bishop, quoted in Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs*, 39.



how well it aids people along the *via salutis* understood as conviction of sin, repentance, New Birth, and growth in holiness. Thus, most evangelicals had a strong commitment to the doctrine of the Trinity, but few and far between are treatises on the nature of the Trinity even as sermons and hymns about the working of the Spirit in believers's lives abound. One may think of this emphasis on the practical (John Wesley was found of describing his approach as "practical divinity") as part of the larger 18<sup>th</sup> century British turn toward practice, but "practical" did not mean an instrumental focus on ordering intramundane life so much as an instrumental focus on advancing believers into a restored relationship with God.

One now sees a resolution to a *prima face* paradox, viz., the atonement, particularly understood in its substitutionary form, was *the* central doctrinal line-in-the-sand between Christian and non-Christian belief, and the cross, sacrifice, and blood of Christ figure so prominently in evangelical piety and literature, yet a corresponding attempt to clearly and thoroughly define the mechanics of the atonement are conspicuously absent. For instance, if one looks at the various attempts to clarify John Wesley's understanding of the *nature* of the atonement, rather than its effects (and remember that John Wesley saw the atonement as *the* defining feature of Christianity against Deism), one is at a loss. Ted Campbell summarizes the various analyses of how Wesley understood the atonement, and the result is that although "substitution is primary among these various theories in John Wesley's thought on the atonement," it is by no means the only theory put forward. One also finds allusions throughout his work to "many elements of Christ's saving work, including substitution, sacrifice, suffering, Christ's priestly intercession, and the notion of Christ's victory over the powers of evil (*Christus Victor*) as elements of Christ's work of salvation."<sup>318</sup> One sees an equal or greater disregard for

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<sup>318</sup> Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs*, 40.

theoretical exactness in the second-generation Anglican Evangelical Charles Jerram. “Atonement meant reconciliation, breaching the gap between man’s sins and God’s holiness,” but the need for speculation on the mechanics of atonement was set aside as “unnecessary.”<sup>319</sup>

This pastoral theological method provides the solution to this apparent dissonance. The primary importance of the atonement comes in the fact *that* it provides the possibility of the forgiveness of the guilt of sin and restored relationship with God. Because evangelicals resisted any sense of the need for abstract intellectual assent to doctrines, *how* the atonement caused this effect would only be important insofar as some understanding of the mechanics of the atonement would be conducive to growth in holiness. This explains on the one hand how evangelicals could emphasize one theory (like substitutionary atonement) while making free use of other images (as Wesley did). One can see that this theory was promoted primarily for its *devotional* effects. In evangelical hymnody, *gratitude* for what Christ has accomplished is by far the more common framework for describing the cross and atonement rather than descriptions of the mechanics that explain the accomplishment.<sup>320</sup>

The discussion of this characteristically evangelical “pastoral” method make possible a discussion of what was likely the most significant intra-movement theological division: that between the Arminians and the Calvinists.<sup>321</sup> Nevertheless, while sharing the same modifiers as their non-evangelical counterparts, evangelical Arminianism and some forms of evangelical Calvinism can be considered distinct from the Arminianism and Calvinism outside of

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<sup>319</sup> W. J. C. Ervin, “Doctrine and Diplomacy: Some Aspects of the Life and Thought of the Anglican Evangelical Clergy, 1797 to 1837” (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 1979), 235.

<sup>320</sup> Almost every hymn that Noll points to that references the atonement or death of Christ also has some sort of praise or thankfulness toward God for this saving activity. For instance, “Sinners! whole love can ne’er forget/ The wormwood and the gall,/Go—spread your trophies at His feet/ And crown him Lord of all” (Perronet, “All Hail”).

<sup>321</sup> The importance of how deeply this division goes likely cannot be overstated; many contemporary evangelical groups still divide along these lines.

evangelicalism. Evangelical Arminianism found some adherents among Anglican Evangelicals and certain dissenting groups such as the New Connexion of General Baptists, but the vast majority of evangelical Arminians were Wesleyan Methodists.<sup>322</sup> In describing his position as “Arminian,” Wesley wanted to consciously reject doctrines such as predestination or imputed righteousness that were common to most forms of Calvinism, but Wesley would not have considered his Arminianism as that claimed by Latitudinarians or non-evangelical High Churchmen, and it certainly was not the theology of Jacobus Arminius or the Dutch Remonstrants. Unlike non-evangelical forms which were, or came very close to, Pelagianism, Wesley rejected any belief that some part of the human being remained untouched by original sin or that humans can participate in the saving act through some innate capacity. Likewise, Wesley vehemently rejected the notion of any good works being necessary prior to justification.<sup>323</sup> What Wesley held in common with other forms of Arminianism was that Christ’s atoning death was potentially for all people and that every human is given the opportunity to freely choose or deny the offer salvation. He also held, in his opposition to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, that in sanctification human beings are *actually* made righteous before God through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. However, he wanted to develop a system that held that at every point the possibility of salvation was completely contingent upon God’s gracious activity and in no way because of any innate postlapsarian human capacity. Even the universal capacity to choose or reject the offer of saving grace came wholly through God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit restoring every human’s capacity to make such a choice.<sup>324</sup> Whether one believes that

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<sup>322</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 27.

<sup>323</sup> Wesley, “Justification by Faith,” III.4, in *Works*, 1. Wesley went so far as to propose that only works performed by justified Christians could in any meaningful sense be considered “good” since actions done by all others, regardless of outward effect, proceed from an evil heart.

Wesley actually *accomplishes* the goal of affirming justification by faith alone, and many of his contemporaries thought he did not, his Arminianism consciously avoided any semblance of justification through both faith and works.<sup>325</sup>

Similarly, evangelical Calvinism, the majority position of most Anglican Evangelicals as well as those Methodists who traced their spiritual lineage to the Welsh revival and/or Whitfield's teaching, generally had significant differences from non-evangelical Calvinism. Some evangelicals did adhere to "ultra-" or "hyper-" Calvinism, which strongly emphasized double predestination, the sovereignty of God to the point of almost no human agency, and *very* limited election, but it was generally strongest in the unreconstructed dissenting traditions such as the limited Baptists.<sup>326</sup> By far most evangelical Calvinists adhered to what came to be known as "moderate Calvinism." Moderate Calvinists accepted the imputed righteousness of Christ, and generally believed in predestination, although this later point was held with some delicacy. Unlike many Puritans, who tended to exalt the doctrine of election, moderate Calvinists thought that it should be "rarely mentioned, lest it stir up controversy, or excite unprofitable speculation." While "they held [the doctrine] devoutly in private they did not often expound it in public."<sup>327</sup> Furthermore, moderate Calvinists would have adhered primarily to what would be called "single predestination," meaning that they accepted "predestination to salvation but not the positive

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<sup>324</sup> Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology for Today* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 159.

<sup>325</sup> Wesley's Arminianism was distinct enough from its non-evangelical variants that some "misinformed" critics of evangelicalism used the term "Calvinism" to refer to Wesleyan Arminianism as well as self-avowed adherents to Calvinist theology (Carter, 48).

<sup>326</sup> Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 52-4. Some of the most vehement critics of hyper-Calvinism were moderate Calvinist Evangelicals.

<sup>327</sup> J.D. Walsh, "The Anglican Evangelicals," in *Aspects de l'Anglicanisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), 94.

decree to damnation.”<sup>328</sup> In accepting single predestination, moderate Calvinists attempted to retain a sense of God’s sovereignty and the complete gratuitousness of salvation while allowing room for human freedom and responsibility, a position argued for by Jonathan Edwards in his *Freedom of the Will* and echoed by the Anglican Evangelical John Scott.<sup>329</sup> While much is often made of the division over predestination, the more critical difference between the Calvinists and Arminians, from their perspective, was probably the question of Christian Perfection or entire sanctification. Both groups held that growth in personal holiness necessarily occurred after the New Birth, but the Wesleyans accepted the possibility of entire sanctification (however rare) in this life, while Calvinists vehemently held that entire sanctification could only happen after death. “Calvinist objections to Christian perfection were probably more extensive than to any other aspect of distinctively Wesleyan spirituality.”<sup>330</sup>

As significant as the modifications of the respective Arminian and Calvinist positions were for evangelical identity, how evangelicals arrived at these positions was equally important. The Calvinism or Arminianism that divided evangelicals at the level of doctrine united them regarding how they arrived at these positions, *viz.*, an overriding concern for a theology that simultaneously emphasized the need for justification through faith alone while also emphasizing the need for growth in holiness. Both Wesley and moderate Calvinists had positive and negative pastoral reasons for their respective positions. Wesley felt predestination contradicted God’s loving character; it undercut revivalist and conversionist preaching by taking the choice to accept God’s offer of forgiveness away from the hearer; and it led to antinomianism by making ultimate

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<sup>328</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 73.

<sup>329</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 64.

<sup>330</sup> Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 271.

salvation a forgone conclusion. Conversely, Calvinists believed that Wesley's Arminianism compromised salvation by faith alone; undercut the necessary posture of gratitude and humility toward God; and imposed an inordinate and unyielding moral burden upon the believer that could lead to despair and the loss of the necessary assurance of pardon.

This portrait of the theological character of first and second generation British evangelicals has already brought out features that may be considered part of a larger evangelical style or culture. An emphasis in preaching on conversion and the use of language of the "New Birth" was almost exclusively the domain of the evangelicals. Similarly, evangelicals made use of imagery emphasizing Christ's atoning work such as the cross, Christ's blood, and Christ's sacrifice much more than their non-evangelical contemporaries. Evangelicals also frequently used language that distanced them from accusations of schismatic tendencies. John Wesley often claimed that his Methodism was not a particular form of Christianity, but rather that the defining features of Methodism were none other than "the common, fundamental principles of Christianity."<sup>331</sup> Wilberforce makes a similar claim in distinguishing between "practical Christianity" and "real Christianity" rather than evangelical and non-evangelical Christianity.<sup>332</sup>

Another feature common to all forms of evangelicalism was a strong emphasis on the centrality of the Bible as source of authority and means of ordering a believer's life. In claiming that they were merely teaching real Christianity, it was most certainly a *Protestant* Christianity, and the language of *sola scriptura* abounds in evangelical literature. John Wesley desired to be seen as "*homo unius libri*" or a "man of one book" and opponents of "methodism" would at

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<sup>331</sup> John Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist" (1742), §17, in *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, in *Works*, 9:41.

<sup>332</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*.

times accuse them of making the bible their god.<sup>333</sup> Mark Noll points out that the evangelical use and conception of the Bible meant their conception of authority overlapped with both rationalist and non-evangelical orthodox Christianity: “In the context of the eighteenth century, evangelicals stood with Arians, proto-liberals and anti-confessionalists in championing the Bible against tradition, but they stood with Christian traditionalists in affirming the Bible against reduced views of God, Christ and the Trinity.”<sup>334</sup> The Bible was the ultimate source and referee on points of disputed doctrine, and Bible study was the focal point of small group gatherings.<sup>335</sup>

Based on how later Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup> century evangelicals came to view the Bible, one may assume that evangelicals always promoted or demanded a simplistic literalism and inerrancy, and so their “biblicism” would not significantly distinguish them from other inerrantist approaches, such as those put forward by modern fundamentalists. However, while evangelicals shared, in theory, the *emphasis* on the centrality of the Bible with most Protestantism<sup>336</sup>, they nonetheless represented a distinct *approach* to the Bible’s place in Christian life. While belief in the Bible’s divine inspiration was nearly universal among evangelicals and at least some evangelicals have always held to some form of inerrancy, first and, especially, second generation evangelicalism allowed a range of views about the degree of errancy and the nature of biblical inspiration.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 12.

<sup>334</sup> Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 267.

<sup>335</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 26-7.

<sup>336</sup> In practice evangelicals made significant use of scripture, which may have differentiated them from an only nominal adherence to the centrality of scripture in other forms of Protestantism at the time.

<sup>337</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 86-7. For instance, “Doddridge distinguished between different modes of inspiration, so that some passages were held to afford greater insight than others into the divine mine... Richard Cecil declared that ‘there is some danger in considering *all* Scripture as *equally* inspired.’ Although Henry foster (‘a plain and deeply pious man’) propounded a theory of verbal inspiration, John Davies argued that the ideas, and not the words, of scripture are inspired.”

More importantly, evangelicals differed considerably from most other forms of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Christianity by focusing on the Bible as a source of subjective direction and truth rather than as a repository of propositional facts. This latter view seems to have been held by both liberals and protestant scholastics alike, with the two groups differing on the factuality of these propositions. Evangelicals, on the other hand, attempted to be vigilant lest they make the Bible an end in and of itself. The use of the Bible was always meant to be a “means of grace, a means to conversion, sanctification, and unity, but above all a means of communion with Christ, the true end,” and it was always to be read with the Spirit’s guidance and as a means for the Spirit to communicate with the believer.<sup>338</sup> That there was a devotional, and practically sacramental, emphasis for evangelical “biblicism,” appears in the contrast between other literalist visions of the “plain and simple” truth of Scripture and the early evangelical belief that the Bible was only ever a “potential means of grace” in which mere reading guaranteed nothing and the believer “had to wrestle with the text in the sure hope that the hidden spiritual treasures would be revealed.”<sup>339</sup> Evangelicals placed great emphasis in this biblically centered piety on introspection as they constantly sought signs within themselves of continual growth in holiness and properly aligned affections.<sup>340</sup> This self-examination as well as confession formed an integral part of the small-group spirituality of which Bible study formed the center.<sup>341</sup>

Evangelicals also had a distinctive constellation of literary forms that they both consumed and produced. Although they tended to deprecate theatrical performances “as tending to demoralize,” it was more often the culture of the theatre that they rejected and many evangelicals

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<sup>338</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 115.

<sup>339</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 115.

<sup>340</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 37.

<sup>341</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 62.



had no problems “reading selected dramatic works in the privacy of their own homes.”<sup>342</sup> The first generation of evangelicals sometimes suspected the novel, owing to its being a new art form. Nevertheless, evangelicalism always had an “elite devoted to literature.”<sup>343</sup> In terms of devotional reading, evangelical habits can best be described as eclectic and extensive. The Wesleys undertook a vast educational campaign that emphasized spiritual literacy, with John Wesley designing, editing, and publishing a 50 volume *Christian Library* from 1749-55 meant to “convey practical divinity to his followers.”<sup>344</sup> This and other evangelical devotional collections included Thomas à Kempis, William Law, and Jeremy Taylor. Early evangelicals held Baxter, Bunyan, and Milton in especially high esteem.<sup>345</sup> Beyond reading devotional works, evangelicals also journaled extensively (part of their introspective, searching spirituality), and stood at the forefront of popularizing autobiography in the form of published “conversion narratives.”<sup>346</sup>

Poetry was very highly valued for literary consumption, with classics such as Horace and Virgil serving as the foundation (in line with general 18<sup>th</sup> century “cultured” taste).<sup>347</sup> Much of this emphasis on poetry was reinforced by and helped to reinforce one of the most important and distinctive evangelical literary forms: the hymn. For these first evangelicals, “hymn singing was almost sacramental.”<sup>348</sup> Hymn singing and hymn writing were intimately linked to evangelical culture both in and out of the established Church. Late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican

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<sup>342</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 67.

<sup>343</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 67.

<sup>344</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 68.

<sup>345</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 35.

<sup>346</sup> Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.

<sup>347</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 67.

<sup>348</sup> Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 273.

Evangelicals paved the way for hymn singing to become an acceptable part of regular liturgical worship in the broader Church of England. Noted hymn writers included both Wesley brothers (but especially Charles), Isaac Watts, John Newton, and William Cowper. The Wesleys<sup>349</sup> led the way in publishing hymn books for their people, but most other groups in the revival followed suit and published their own collections emphasizing their own authors, although almost all evangelicals drew heavily from across the movement.<sup>350</sup> Hymns could be didactic, teaching about doctrines such as the Trinity, incarnation, or Christian life, and often they served as one of the most potent means of communicating evangelical theology. Many hymns were also written equally or primarily to offer God praise and thanksgiving for God's saving work. Importantly, evangelicals emphasized hymn singing because it functioned as a means of grace which reformed and healed the affections.<sup>351</sup> While hymns were sung, they were also seen as a genre of poetry in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and were consumed for their literary as well as spiritual value (such is especially the case with William Cowper).

Understanding evangelical literary taste proves particularly important for this argument because, of all the "cultural" (rather than specifically doctrinal) markers of evangelicalism, one could perceive engagement with popular entertainment culture as the most likely to set Coleridge apart from evangelicals. It is true that many contemporaries perceived evangelicals as overly "serious," ascetical, and opposed to entertainment, and, especially when it came to things such as gambling, bear-baiting, or playing cards, this perception was not unfounded. However, the above description should show that while this tendency toward cultural asceticism could extend even to

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<sup>349</sup> John Wesley having gave considerable thought to the power of music to affect human transformation and even wrote a treatise on this subject, as did Coleridge, with a similar set of concerns and interests.

<sup>350</sup> Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 274-5.

<sup>351</sup> Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 41-54.

what we would now call “high culture,” it was not at all uncommon for evangelicals to cultivate an appreciation for a broad range of literary forms. Furthermore, the form most associated with English Romantic literary production – poetry – also happens to have been the form most widely accepted in evangelical culture.

Evangelical thought emphasized the need for growth in holiness to manifest in an impulse to preach Christianity to the unconverted, meaning either “nominal” or “almost” Christians as well as “heathens” who had not ever heard the Gospel. It is from this impulse to spread the “good news” that the movement gets its name.<sup>352</sup> This desire to reform the “inner person” was matched by a zeal for bettering the material conditions of those suffering in society and of crusading against social evils.<sup>353</sup> The first two generations of evangelicals saw economic and social inequality as Christian moral concerns and campaigned against illiteracy, poor laws, an emerging consumer culture, and, above all, slavery. Some late 18<sup>th</sup> century Wesleyan Methodists even involved themselves in revolutionary democratic movements and Methodist class meetings may have helped inform the structures of the emerging organized labor movement. Evangelicals were certainly not the only group in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with reformist tendencies, and often found themselves aligned with social radicals from rational dissenting or philosophical traditions. This reformist tendency created space for cooperation between the generally politically conservative evangelicals and political radicals.

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<sup>352</sup> Interestingly, this did not always translate into an explicit Christian exclusivism as one may expect and as would become a feature of much later evangelicalism. Figures such as John Wesley entertained the possibility that salvation could be found outside of “real” Christianity, including among Catholics and explicit non-Christians. In contemporary ecumenical/interfaith parlance, it would actually be the High Church party that was most inclined to “exclusivism,” while evangelicals would have held to something like “inclusivism.”

<sup>353</sup> This impulse occurred to such an extent that Bebbington considers “reformism” one of the four cardinal defining features of evangelicalism.

The two last features distinguishing the whole evangelical movement from other religious traditions are in some ways two sides of the same coin, viz., how they characterized (or mischaracterized) their ideological opponents and how they were characterized (or mischaracterized) by those outside the movement. Evangelicals opposed most forms of radical rational religion such as Deism (in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century) and Arianism.<sup>354</sup> Of all these groups, though, “the strongest evangelical hostility... was reserved for Socinianism.”<sup>355</sup> Evangelicals of all forms so firmly opposed Socinianism that they could sometimes be moved, like the Anglican Henry Venn, to call Socinianism a “poison.”<sup>356</sup> For as much as evangelicals opposed theoretical threats to vital Christianity, they also vehemently opposed what they saw as nominal, “practical,” or “almost” Christians, *i.e.*, those who thought of Christianity as requiring no more than adherence to a bare minimum of belief and external moral behavior, often motivated by “mere” prudential morality. Both Wesley and Wilberforce often presented this later force as a far greater impediment to the propagation of true Christianity because these “almost” Christians existed in far greater numbers and already believed themselves to be practicing authentic Christianity.<sup>357</sup>

If evangelicals tended to mischaracterize non-evangelicals as practicing a coldly rationalistic or ill-motivated inauthentic Christianity, their opponents often proved just as ready to caricature evangelical belief and practice. Especially after the 1750s, these opponents failed or refused to see distinctions within evangelicalism and would deridingly label anyone associated with the revival a “Methodist.”<sup>358</sup> These attacks generally used the stock criticism that

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<sup>354</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 33.

<sup>355</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 33.

<sup>356</sup> Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*, 34.

<sup>357</sup> See the similarity in language between Wesley’s Sermon 2, “The Almost Christian,” in *Works*, 1, and Wilberforce’s description of “practical” rather than “real” Christianity.

“methodism” was nothing more than rank “enthusiasm,” although one can parse five more specific classes of argument leveled against evangelicals: “(1) the Methodists offered an easy but false way to salvation; (2) Methodists caused dissension and schism in the Church; (3) the Methodists were deliberate hypocrites; (4) the Methodists were reviving religious fanaticism; and (5) the Methodists were Papists and Jacobites.”<sup>359</sup> Often the two distinctive evangelical claims open to the most suspicion were the centrality of the Holy Spirit, which led many to believe that evangelicals made claims to having direct inspiration unmoored from the rationally securing the social order, and justification by faith alone, which opponents argued led to moral laxity or even antinomianism since salvation was not contingent upon any works.<sup>360</sup>

Having given a general description of the distinguishing features commonly of the early Evangelical Revival, I can turn to describing the characteristics of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century moderate Anglican Evangelicalism that distinguished it as both an identifiable early evangelical sub-culture and form of Anglicanism. If two adjectives could best characterize this form of evangelicalism when compared to its first and second generation siblings, they would be “moderate” and “conciliatory.” This group had to fight a kind of apologetic campaign on two

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<sup>358</sup> Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 25. Conversely, the ability to distinguish between the various forms of evangelicalism, particularly on the fine points of doctrinal and disciplinary disagreement, was generally a sign that someone had intimate internal knowledge of the movement(s).

<sup>359</sup> Lyles, *Methodism Mocked*, 26.

<sup>360</sup> One of the important points here is not that everyone who argued against enthusiasm or for morality was anti-evangelical. There were indeed some on the fringes of the evangelical movement who found “enthusiasm” a positive or at least less negative accusation and there were some who made claims about being free from the demands of morality, but these remained relatively limited phenomena. Indeed, it was often leaders of the evangelical movement who remained just as interested in distinguishing between authentic forms of revived Christianity and counterfeit forms that truly deserved the name “enthusiasm.” Similarly, evangelical leaders were acutely aware of the always lingering danger of antinomianism that arose from teaching justification by faith alone with no corresponding emphasis on sanctification. Thus, the real distinction here between those within, or at least positively disposed towards, the evangelical movement and those hostile to it was that the latter believed that all forms of “methodism” necessarily were or were strongly inclined toward enthusiasm and antinomianism.

fronts, both maintaining their status as evangelicals while also arguing that they were an authentic manifestation of the Church of England.

Evangelical Anglicanism saw a shift in the pattern of coming to “authentic Christianity,” with key leaders such as “Simeon, Hannah Moore, Bickersteth, Budd, Richmond, Bexley, Jerram, Scott and Venn” turning away from an emphasis on sudden and ecstatic conversion experiences.<sup>361</sup> Favoring the euphemistic “serious impressions” rather than “conversion,” this group distanced itself from the earlier “emotionalism and enthusiasm of sudden conversion” in favor of the “deeply moral and thoughtful, gradual progress to a fuller light.”<sup>362</sup> Conversion was no longer “primarily an emotional experience nor a change of theological opinions, but a moral transformation, so that one no longer lived for self, but devoted all to God as a thank-offering for the redeeming love of Jesus.”<sup>363</sup> Evangelicals became so acutely aware of the threat of accusations of “enthusiasm” and association with “disorderly” Methodists that they had stronger prejudices against “unusual experiences” than even John Wesley allowed. These clergy urged their people “to treat all unusual experiences – instantaneous conversions, ‘impressions,’ visions – with great caution, and never to publicise them” since, “however vivid and apparently self-evidencing, these feelings were never to be treated as reliable proofs of the Spirit’s presence” and “might be genuine – but they were just as likely to be false, the work of an overheated imagination.”<sup>364</sup> Furthermore, the individual “experiences” of conversion were deemphasized in

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<sup>361</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 24.

<sup>362</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 23.

<sup>363</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 24.

<sup>364</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 97.

favor of a more formal and communal pattern of “experience,” seen as the “steady, cumulative experience of sanctification and the habitual love of God and man.”<sup>365</sup>

In terms of doctrinal identification, moderate Evangelicals tended to be moderate Calvinists as well.<sup>366</sup> In fact, they tended to be the Revival’s most moderate and irenic Calvinists, especially when compared with the occasional bouts of hyper-Calvinism or the more confrontational forms in the conflict between 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodists. They accepted a form of Calvinism “inherited to some extent from the ‘middle-way’ Puritans and the Saumur School of Amyraut in France” and “held (though seldom taught) a ‘hypothetical universalism’ that ingeniously combined a belief in general Redemption with the doctrine of particular election.”<sup>367</sup> While often taking the acceptance of particular election on the basis of personal experience to the extreme and, unlike earlier moderate Calvinists such as Edwards, recognizing the inconsistency of free will and predestination, this group felt that both points needed to be held and appealed to God’s infinite mystery for their reconciliation.<sup>368</sup> Some even went so far as to claim that pious Arminianism (it seems this means of the kind put forward by Wesley) was as good in practice as Calvinism, and there was a significant attempt to synthesize the two positions for the unity and strength of the Evangelical movement.<sup>369</sup>

This Evangelical emphasis on moderate Calvinism leads to the larger conversation about their other prominent distinguishing features. While not all Evangelicals were self-proclaimed Calvinists, and not all Arminians were non-Evangelicals, affiliating with Calvinism was almost

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<sup>365</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 97.

<sup>366</sup> Although not exclusively – some remained Arminians in the Wesleyan sense of the term.

<sup>367</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 93.

<sup>368</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 94.

<sup>369</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Discipline,” 35.

exclusively an Evangelical phenomenon within the Church of England in the opening decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>370</sup> Interestingly, this acceptance was generally modified such that what was meant by Calvinism was an acceptance of a belief in the “Reformed theology which they, the English Reformers, and the Continental Reformers held in common” rather than emphasizing appeals to the theology of Jean Calvin.<sup>371</sup> These “moderate Calvinists” could easily roll back their claims to “Calvinism” and instead insist that they were really just expressing either a general “Augustinian” or “common Reformation” theology.<sup>372</sup> Almost all Evangelicals assumed that they were the authentic theological representatives of the true Reformation vision of the Church of England, and they saw their theology fully contained within the 39 Articles – so much so that of all the theological traditions in the Church of England at the time, “perhaps only the Evangelicals accepted them joyfully in their literal sense, claiming that they alone held unequivocally to the title deeds of the English Reformation.”<sup>373</sup>

To demonstrate loyalty to the established church and distance themselves from the growing influence of the Methodists, now organized as a dissenting body, Evangelicals argued that they in fact embodied *the* authentic form of Anglicanism, the true *via media* charting a “path between the Scylla of high Calvinist fatalism and the Charybdis of Arminianism.”<sup>374</sup> While they did not hold the Church’s liturgy in the same esteem as High Churchmen, seeing the Prayer Book as still an imperfect human creation, nonetheless their “approval of the liturgy was fervent,

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<sup>370</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 342-3.

<sup>371</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Discipline,” 39.

<sup>372</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 93.

<sup>373</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 48.

<sup>374</sup> Walsh and Taylor, “Anglican Church,” 57.



though not without some qualifications which were often unexpressed, at least in public.”<sup>375</sup> The only significant part of the liturgy that would actively trouble Evangelicals was the baptismal Rite, as its language supported a theology of baptismal regeneration. Based on the direction of later evangelical thought, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Evangelicals would have held more in common with the High Church party when it came to Eucharistic theology than with Latitudinarians, and they often held to a strong view of the real presence.<sup>376</sup> In line with their understanding of themselves as “true” Anglicanism, Evangelicals held in high esteem, and sought to ground their thought and practice in, a particular collection of early Anglican divines including “Richard Hooker, Bishops Jewel, Davenant (the conciliatory English delegate to the synod of Dort), Joseph Hall (whose works they reprinted), the post-Restoration prelates Reynolds and Hopkins, and, above all, the saintly Scots Episcopalian, Archbishop Leighton.”<sup>377</sup> These early Anglican divines allowed them to “argue that their beliefs, which were now spurned as new-fangled heresy and ‘enthusiasm,’ had been held by thousands of clergymen in the century after the Reformation.”<sup>378</sup> The appeal to these thinkers almost always belied an affiliation with or at least sympathy toward Evangelicalism – a point of no small importance since Coleridge built his most significant published work of theology around aphorisms drawn from Leighton.

While they claimed that the Church of England retained their full loyalty, Evangelicals always remained uneasy about confining true Christianity within the established Church. True, they wanted to differentiate themselves both from the earlier irregularities of (what could seem to

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<sup>375</sup> Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 14.

<sup>376</sup> They would never have accepted Transubstantiation – but of course they were hardly alone as even the Highest Churchmen would have avoided any appearance of such “Romish” doctrine.

<sup>377</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 92.

<sup>378</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 92.

be) only nominally Anglican clergymen like Wesley and Whitfield. Thus, Evangelicals were often eager to demonstrate that they were committed to the good order of the Church, saw dissent as “unjustified,” and saw the “Church as immeasurably superior to Nonconformity.”<sup>379</sup> At the same time, they saw the episcopacy as part of the *bene esse* rather than the *esse* of the true Church and were more than willing to recognize many real Christians, deserving cooperation, in dissenting bodies, as well as the only nominal Christianity of many in the Church.<sup>380</sup>

Anglican Evangelicals could claim relatively few distinctive evangelical devotional practices, but they certainly emphasized some more than others. While still engaging in small group study and edification, the center of Evangelical piety shifted to the family, with “periods of prayer, Bible reading and meditation” becoming among the most important forms of devotional piety and means of grace.<sup>381</sup> In fact, the Bible may have risen to an even greater place of prominence as a devotional tool and means of personal communion with the Holy Spirit since the fear of charges of enthusiasm led to the acceptance of the work of the Holy Spirit being largely confined to acceptable means of grace, *viz.*, “private prayer, public worship, the sacraments, above all through the study of the Bible.”<sup>382</sup> As noted above, Anglican Evangelicals, like other evangelicals, employed hymns and were the prime agents for making hymnody part of mainstream Anglican worship, but even here such additions had to be done in accordance with proper Prayer Book discipline and only cautiously.

British evangelicalism in its first two centuries is not discontinuous with the forms of evangelicalism that would develop, proliferate, and diversify over the next two centuries. Nor did

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<sup>379</sup> Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 16.

<sup>380</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Discipline,” 29-30.

<sup>381</sup> Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984* (London: T&T Clark, 1989), 105.

<sup>382</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 97.

the Revival occur in isolation from the larger fabric of British religious culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, I have argued in this chapter that while evangelicalism overlapped in different ways with various other distinct religious traditions on various points of doctrine or practice, one can nevertheless still point to a set of doctrinal commitments, emphases, and interpretations, theological method, forms of practice and life habits, and communicative style to see evangelicalism as a distinct movement of the time. Furthermore, the sub-movements spawned by the Revival show enough internal cohesion to distinguish them from each other, such that one can differentiate the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican Evangelicals as part of identifiable movement over and against other contemporary evangelical and non-evangelical religious traditions. At the same time, I believe that this sketch has demonstrated that “evangelical” identity (even in its more specified forms) was not, for the most part, a matter of a long list of essential features and that missing any single one of them would automatically disqualify a person from inclusion in this movement. True, it would be difficult to conceive of an evangelical who did not believe in some special saving significance of Christ or who had a very low view of biblical authority, but a failure to vigorously defend substitutionary atonement or to maintain an aversion to theatre going would not in and of itself be enough to remove such a person from the evangelical rolls. The movement’s identifying markers still allowed for a great deal of diversity, and the idiosyncrasies of human biography, psychology, and agency certainly allow for deviation on individual points – sometimes significantly – from the ideal type of evangelical (or Anglican Evangelical) without the need to invoke *sui generis* status for that person’s form of Christianity.

I make these points because I now move from the general outline of the forms of religious life and practice in Britain’s long 18<sup>th</sup> century to the question of how an individual – and a particularly remarkable and creative individual – Samuel Taylor Coleridge, fit into that

religious milieu. In the next three chapters I will argue that Coleridge, despite having his own creative take on Christian doctrine and practice, and maintaining a critical stance toward some aspects of evangelicalism, was not only closest to Evangelical Anglicanism, but became in fact some kind of moderate Evangelical Anglican. Furthermore, with the background given in these last two chapters, I believe it possible to show that one need not invoke the allowance of individual deviation from the norm nearly as much as one may initially expect to see Coleridge as conforming to this standard. Coleridge's thought, piety, forms of argument, sources of theological authority, and even theological method and personal relationships together paint the picture of a man who returned to Christian orthodoxy with evangelical ideas and gradually made the journey toward a more thoroughly Evangelical Anglican form of faith and life as he matured. Before turning to how Coleridge seems to have taken on the form of life of an Evangelical, I will take the next two chapters to show how Coleridge's form of thinking appears to have come into significant conformity with evangelical theology.

## CHAPTER 4

### COLERIDGE'S PHILOSOPHICAL, EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY (PART I)

As stated in the introduction, interest in Coleridge as a religious thinker and theologian has recently come strongly into vogue, with influential and intellectually substantial figures such as Douglas Hedley and John Milbank mining Coleridge's thought for its theological and philosophical significance. Likewise, while still presenting Coleridge as returning to an "orthodox" Anglicanism<sup>383</sup> or adopting a kind of *sui generis* (for his time) "Augustinian/Platonic" philosophical and theological Protestantism undergirded by the conceptual vocabulary of German Idealism, the proliferation of scholarship on Coleridge's ambivalent (rather than downright hostile) approach to (mainly Wesleyan) Methodism complicates these two categorizations. This larger scholarly conversation makes room for a further and deeper reevaluation of Coleridge's relationship to his contemporary religious landscape. Moving beyond the (valid) observation about Coleridge's ambivalence to dissenting evangelical traditions, I will spend the next three chapters building the case that Coleridge's theological writing justified/exposed an Evangelical Anglican set of doctrinal and practical emphases grounded by a correct philosophical rigor. Seeing Coleridge as providing an intellectually "beefed-up" Anglican Evangelicalism, and therefore an Anglican Evangelical identity for Coleridge himself, will further make sense of Coleridge's complicated relationship to Methodism and dissenting evangelicalism. I hope to maintain in this argument the idea put forward by a range of thinkers such as Hedley and Prickett that Coleridge did not simply re-hash

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<sup>383</sup> A term that I hope in the last two chapters I have shown is not narrow enough to provide significant clarity about Coleridge's thought.

German philosophy, but instead expressed his own Christian Neoplatonism/Idealism best manifested through the creative appropriation of German philosophical writing.<sup>384</sup>

I will begin by looking at Coleridge's explicit doctrinal commitments to show that he seems to have believed and emphasized those elements that one would expect of a late 18<sup>th</sup> century Evangelical (chapter 4). Additionally, this current chapter will include an extended discussion of the ways in which Coleridge self-consciously located himself closer to evangelical than non-evangelical thought, both through explicit statements and through his understanding of the psychological and historical dialectic between reason and will. Second, I will exposit Coleridge's theological development of these doctrinal outlines (chapter 5). This exposition will show that Coleridge's more developed theology committed him to even more distinctive evangelical positions *and* that he did so guided by a methodology that appears consistent with most evangelical intellectuals of the time.<sup>385</sup> Finally, I will look at the larger religious culture that Coleridge inhabited during the second half of his life (chapter 6) to show that he not only shared theological emphases with the Evangelicals, but also a common set of rhetorical opponents, canon of authority, and certain stylistic conventions. These three next chapters will therefore

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<sup>384</sup> I do not mean this as an indictment of the very thorough scholarship of those like Hedley. These works do not share my purpose of locating Coleridge in the 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century religious landscape and, particularly with Hedley, thoroughly analyze Coleridge's religious philosophy within the confines they set for themselves.

<sup>385</sup> Now, it is true that Coleridge sought a fully unified theory of all human life (including knowledge), meaning that his theology is supported by a much more robust intellectual scaffolding than would have been found with almost any other Evangelicals. Furthermore, his philosophical outlook is self-consciously quite different from the dominant Lockean-Newtonian empiricist tradition that undergirded nearly all other forms of British thought, including that of more philosophically inclined evangelicals. Ultimately, I will argue that Coleridge provides a theological synthesis of warmth and light, i.e., of the affective and rational, but this is not accomplished by synthesizing Moderate Anglicanism at the time with the rational theology current in Britain at that point. Rather, he takes what would have been a moderate stance regarding the "enthusiasm" of the evangelical movement conceived broadly and weds it to a completely different conception of rationality than either "rationalists" or "evangelicals" would have used. I would argue that Coleridge's call for a synthesis actually made him more open to certain forms of "enthusiasm" than most other Anglican Evangelicals of his day. In other words, while I am not as prepared to defend it with the limited space I have in this work, my sense is that Coleridge, while he saw certain forms of Methodist popular piety as overly "enthusiastic" or "fanatical," he would have allowed for still greater latitude when it came to "enthusiastic" displays than the much more cautious Anglican Evangelicals, thus actually placing him somewhere between the most ecstatic forms of piety and that prescribed by Evangelicals.

work together to show that Coleridge developed a theological vision that emphasized most, if not all, of the distinguishing features of Anglican Evangelicals within the larger 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century British landscape, that he seems to make use of the same authorities and share many of the same markers of a larger Evangelical culture, and that finally he had both the occasions to have been shaped by the larger evangelical world and that a somewhat tenuous resting place in Anglican Evangelicalism actually makes sense for Coleridge given his distinctive spiritual journey through life.

It will help to briefly recall the theological features that were identified in the last chapter which distinguished evangelicals, and, specifically, moderate Anglican Evangelicals. These were an emphasis on the *ordo salutis* as the heart of Christian thought and practice, with this understood broadly in terms of the goal of human life as full communion with God, a robust belief in original sin such that this relationship is severed and is fully outside of human power to reestablish, the possibility of this restored relationship coming through Christ's atoning death on the cross, and the need for repentance for the acceptance of this offer of forgiveness which is accompanied by the "New Birth" and followed by sanctification, all of which are intimately linked to the work of the Holy Spirit. This means an emphasis on Salvation or Justification by faith alone and a belief that good works are the consequence and/or proof, rather than in any way the cause, of this salvation. Anglican Evangelicals were further distinguished by frequently holding to some form of very moderate Calvinism, often expressed only with several caveats and flowing from pastoral, rather than strictly ideational/philosophical, motivations.

The Coleridge who I argue stands within the Anglican Evangelical tradition begins to emerge in a consistent form in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after he had begun his return to

an acknowledged Trinitarian Christianity.<sup>386</sup> While his thought would develop and expand until his final years into a form that I will argue becomes more and more consistently Evangelical, if one looks at the doctrinal commitments Coleridge spelled out in late 1810, a full 17 years before he “emerged into the open as a revived member of the Anglican Church,” he already accepted a set of emphases that would have been fully at home within the larger evangelical tradition.<sup>387</sup>

On November 3, 1810, Coleridge put forward in his Notebooks a “Confessio Fidei” (Confession of Faith) that outlined his religious convictions. Here he divides up his understanding of the principle truths of religion into two “tables,” the first of which includes belief that he is “a Free Agent” such that he “has a will which renders [him] justly responsible for [his] actions, omissive as well as commissive” (CN 4005). The second and third items on this first table are an “absolute Duty” to believe in God who is the supreme reason and “most holy Will” and that he is a spiritual being who should believe in the life to come – a belief wrapped up with a rejection that one should consider “the Pains and Pleasures of this Life, as the primary motive or ultimate end” of action (CN 4005). Importantly, Coleridge sees the division between the two tables as between “the Religion of all finite Rational Beings” and “Belief as a Christian.” Here he lists four elements that are unique to and constitutive of Christianity. The “fundamental article of Christianity” is the belief that he [Coleridge] is a fallen creature, “born a child of Wrath,” and of himself “capable of moral evil, but not capable of moral good” (CN 4005). Second, he believed that “the Word which is from all eternity with God and is God, assumed our human nature to redeem” humanity and that “no other mode of redemption is conceivable” (CN

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<sup>386</sup> I still argue in greater length in chapter 7 that Coleridge’s transition to “Anglican Evangelicalism” did not happen immediately, and his return to a restored communion with the Church of England was the result of a long and arduous path of personal reflection and theological clarification.

<sup>387</sup> John Beer, *Coleridge’s Play of Mind* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 229.



4005). This second point is strongly linked with the third, which is that this incarnate Word is none other than Jesus Christ and that “his miraculous Birth, his agony, his Crucifixion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, were all Symbols of our Redemption... and necessary parts of the awful [sic] process” (CN 4005). Finally, Coleridge believed “in the decent and sending of the Holy Spirit, by whose free grace alone obtained for [him] by the merits of [his] Redeemer [he] can alone be sanctified, and restored... to be a Child of God” (CN 4005).

Significantly Coleridge does not believe at this point that anyone who denies the Trinity (and therefore the divinity of Christ) can in any way be considered a Christian. More significantly may be *why* this is the case: he draws a distinction between the Trinity as a mere philosophical postulant and the Trinity as necessarily related to belief in the fullness of original sin and true “Christian” views on redemption, i.e., that Christ must be seen as “God incarnate taking upon himself the Sins of the World, and himself thereby redeeming us & giving us Life everlasting” rather than the Socinian view that Christ was “a mere man, even as Moses or Paul, dying in attestation of the Truth of his Preaching & in order by his resurrection to give a proof of his mission, & inclusivity of the resurrection to all men” (CN 4006). Thus, Coleridge does not make belief in the Trinity *per se* a defining Christian belief, but only Trinitarian belief firmly rooted in the distinctive Christian teaching about the incarnation, atonement, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Thus, as for Wesley, belief in the Trinity in the abstract does not properly distinguish the Christianity from the non-Christian, but the belief in the incarnate second person of the Trinity as the only means of our salvation through his atoning life and death does.

Here in this early exposition, Coleridge outlines an understanding of the distinctive marks of Christianity that concurs with the various formulations put forward by Wesley and other evangelicals. The first of the four points indicates a robust view of original sin and the utter

human need for divine Grace for salvation, and the fourth points to a belief in sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit. Finally, Coleridge throughout explains that part and parcel of Christianity is a belief in the divinity of Christ by whose life and death (with an emphasis on the experience of crucifixion and death) the forgiveness of guilt and the restoration to being made “Children of God” are made possible, and this only because of the communication of divine grace through the Holy Spirit and not because of some cooperation with an innate human capacity (which is, being a “child of Wrath,” only capable of evil).

Coleridge clarifies that he accepted justification by faith alone as meaning that humans are utterly incapable of saving themselves through their own power in a series of notes that he made on an anti-Methodist pamphlet by the “Barrister” John Sedgwick in 1810.<sup>388</sup> While not claiming to favor Methodism, the whole thrust of Coleridge’s commentary is a defense of the Methodists against the particular challenges levelled by Sedgwick. The problem with Sedgwick’s argument is that he argues against the Methodists on *doctrinal* grounds, which Coleridge believes to be both orthodox and nothing more or less than those of the Church of England, rather than their particularities, all of which appear to Coleridge to be matters of practice, organization, and general culture: “Never, never can the Methodists be successfully assailed, if not honestly! and never honestly or with any chance of success, except as *Methodists*—for their practices, their alarming Theocracy, their stupid, mad, and mad-driving Superstitions...their doctrines are those of the Established Church” (CM IV 657-8). While true that Coleridge does not come out and say that he in fact whole heartedly agrees with the Methodists and Church of England on these doctrinal points, it seems fair from the challenge he levels against Sedgwick that he at least has significant proclivities toward these doctrinal commitments. In other words,

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<sup>388</sup> Coleridge uses this identification in his marginal notes since Sedgwick identifies himself in the pamphlet only as “Barrister,” even if we do know the identity of the author.

Coleridge argues that there is indeed a fair way to critique Methodists – and that they should be thus critiqued – but Sedgwick has selected the one avenue for which they seem the *least* liable to criticism, *viz.*, stated doctrine. In this light, one can fairly see Coleridge’s defense of the “Calvinist Methodist” understanding of Justification by faith as his defending a view that he shared. For Coleridge, it is only “the thickest Film of Bigot-slime” that “can prevent a man from seeing that this Tenet of Justification *by faith alone* is exclusively a matter between the Calvinist’s own Heart & his Maker who alone knows the true source of his words and actions” (CM IV 648). Nevertheless, “to his neighbours & fellow-creedsmen his spotless Life & good works are demanded, not indeed as the prime efficient cause of his salvation, but as the necessary & only possible *Signs* of that Faith, which is the *means* of that Salvation, of which Christ’s free Grace is the Cause, and the sanctifying Spirit the Perfecter” (CM IV 648).

What is important about this early orthodox (and at least germane to evangelicalism) “Confession of Faith” is that, while he may have elaborated the philosophical foundations for this set of beliefs as he matured, his actual stated beliefs remained remarkably constant for the rest of his life. In 1830 he drew up a statement called “On the Articles of Faith Necessary to Christians” in order to lay the boundary markers for what Christian groups were authentically Christian (and thus deserved toleration and protection by the state) and what groups *as groups* fell outside these acceptable boundaries (TT 455-6)<sup>389</sup>. He again distinguishes between properly Christian belief and what is known and affirmed through human reason alone, although the weight of the articles now rests on the side of the properly and distinctly Christian. There are two

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<sup>389</sup> Coleridge could see individual Roman Catholics as authentically Christian, but he believed that the Roman Catholic Church as an institution could not be permitted for the health of an independent and democratic state; he similarly had questions about whether Quakers, by not having sacraments, could be properly classed a Christian group. Unlike these questionably Christian groups, Coleridge had no doubts that Unitarians and Socinians were *not* Christian, even if he could admit in other locations that individual Unitarians could be Christian (because individuals could be Christian *despite* the essential, unquestionably unchristian elements of their formal creeds).

articles related to a belief in “a Living God a Holy One” who is “himself the Ground of his own Being” and who is alone among all other beings “the rightful, the only permitted, Object of our religious Worship, direct or indirect” (SW&F 1484). The distinctively Christian articles are: that humans can only address themselves to God “through a mediator” who is necessarily “both God and man”; that humans need “a Redemption, which of [their] own power [they] are incapable of effecting” and that this redemption has been offered “by and thro’ the Mediator, along with all the means of finally effecting it”; and that “*All* the particulars, historic, declarative, or perceptive, *necessarily* to the rational acceptance of this Offer... are contained in that collection of Books, received as Canonical, by the Churches *universally*, which we call *the Bible*” (SW&F 1485).

A prayer<sup>390</sup> that Coleridge wrote for his own nightly devotions makes clearer that Coleridge not only sought a politically or ecclesiastically expedient least-common-denominator Christianity at the end of his life, but that he truly felt the above stated exposition constituted the real heart of Christianity. In this prayer, he begins by invoking the purpose of human life as seeking God as “the only one Absolute Good, the Eternal I AM, as the Author of my Being” (SW&F 1486). He then moves on to describing the grace given to him through Christ, the “only begotten Son, the Way & the Truth from Everlasting, & who took on himself Humanity,” who provides “condescending Mercy” and “an access & a return” to God despite Coleridge’s “own corrupted Will all Evil & the consequences of Evil” (SW&F 1487). The result of Christ’s “condescending” action is to remove the “taint of [his] mortal corruption” because of the “seed of Christ” placed “into the Body of this Death” (SW&F 1487). Through the aid of the Spirit Coleridge believed he could have a “more enkindled Love” and “deeper Faith” (SW&F 1487). The content of this prayer emphasizes the end of human life as union with God through love, the

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<sup>390</sup> Coleridge’s emphasis on a devotional life centered on individual and family prayer and Bible reading is, as a form of life, an indication of an Evangelical form of Christian piety. I explore this at greater length in chapter 6.

need for Christ's atonement as the only means of overcoming our corrupted nature and inability to be in relationship with God, the transformation of the soul according to the growth of Christ therein, and the Spirit accomplishing this transformation.

Further helping my case that Coleridge became some sort of Anglican Evangelical is how he himself spoke about the Evangelicals in the Church of England. While he did not see them as a perfect group (a condition that is necessary for inclusion in almost no larger movement), his praise for them far outweighed his criticisms – a significant point distinguishing his view of Anglican Evangelicals from his opinions about the Methodists. In a letter to R. Brabant from May 1, 1815, Coleridge announced that he was far nearer Mr. T. Methuen's Creed than the “fashionable one of the *sober in-the-way-of-preferment* Churchmen” but that unfortunately “the Evangelical Clergy, who are really saving the Church, are too generally deficient in Learning, both historical and metaphysical — & in consequence take weak positions, and neglect the most impregnable” (CL III 567). His reference to Mr. T. Methuen seems by all accounts to be the Rev. Thomas A. Methuen, and this man was, according to Methuen's son, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century clergyman “toned and ruled by the several points of doctrine brought into prominence, and deservedly so, at the time of the Evangelical revival.”<sup>391</sup> These central doctrines were “Man's fall in Adam, his recovery in Christ by faith in His merits, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” and while “other omissions he would excuse,” these central emphases “*must* be present, and *were* present in all his discourses.”<sup>392</sup> The emphasis on these themes, along with the absence of any stated “creed” in the autobiography, indicates that whatever “creed” Coleridge would have

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<sup>391</sup> Thomas Methuen, *The Autobiography of Thomas Anthony Methuen with a memoir by T.P. Methuen*, 227. This “autobiography,” to which is added the recollections of Methuen's son, is in fact a thoroughly developed evangelical conversion narrative to the point where it appears almost an archetypical instance of the genre.

<sup>392</sup> Methuen, *Autobiography*, 227-8.

received from Methuen would have almost certainly focused on these points. That Coleridge then moves directly to a description of the “Evangelical clergy” shows that Coleridge had no misunderstandings about the school of thought with which Methuen affiliated.

Importantly, while Coleridge did critique the Evangelical clergy at this point, it was not on account either of their doctrinal emphases or conception of the Church and its heritage, but simply that they lacked the theological and philosophical depth to defend and develop their positions. As Coleridge continues in the letter, he “ventured to advise Mr T. Methuen to draw up a *Professio Fidei* of an Evangelical Clergyman — 1. What he does believe. 2. What he does not believe! 3. — and why? — 4. and by what authorities confirmed” (CL 566). Coleridge recognized both that the Evangelicals wanted to claim that their beliefs were “that which was *common* to all the Great Reformers” and that the tradition of the self-proclaimed Arminians in the Church was a “semi-Romanism” founded on the teachings of Grotius, who was himself “farther receded than Arminius” from the teaching of “*all* the first Reformers” (CL 566). Especially given that Coleridge had, five years earlier in the above-mentioned critique of Sedgwick, affirmed that the Methodists doctrinally affirmed everything that was taught in the Church of England, one can fairly assume that Coleridge had no problem accepting this understanding of the Evangelical party as holding the true Reformation doctrines of the Church of England against the Arminianism of the other Church parties, but that they were unfortunately insufficiently equipped to defend such a position intellectually.

Coleridge does not *explicitly* state that he counts himself among the Evangelicals in the Church of England, but he also never explicitly dissociates himself from them. He also at times provides implicit clues that he saw himself as somehow associated with this emerging party. This affiliation would only seem to grow stronger as Coleridge matured. The above quote shows that

Coleridge recognized divisions within the Church of England<sup>393</sup> and saw the Evangelicals as the closest to defending the authentically pan-Reformation doctrine that he had expressed in his own 1810 *Confessio Fidei*. Three things indicate that Coleridge at this point was at least growing less concerned with other people associating him with the Evangelical party, and he may even have had growing sense of actually affiliating with them. First, Coleridge remains constant in his doctrinal commitments from 1810 until the end of his life. Second, he saw these commitments as consistent with both the Wesleyan and Calvinist Methodists *and* the Church of England broadly in 1810 and in all likelihood specifically with the Evangelicals by 1815. This second point is confirmed by the analysis in the preceding chapter in which it was argued that some constellation of a specific emphasis on original sin, the need for the incarnation and an emphasis on Christ's atoning work, belief in justification by faith, and acceptance of growth in sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion were, in the Church of England, almost exclusively the domain of the Evangelicals and were put forward as Coleridge's essential features of Christianity. Additionally, he did not bring forward any of the theological emphases that would have been expected by someone in the High Church party, such as the extreme importance or necessity of proper ecclesial mediation of saving grace, a firm commitment to a doctrine of baptismal regeneration, or a sense that the Liturgy, rather than the 39 Articles or Catechism, provided the Church of England its true doctrinal foundation. Third, from 1815

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<sup>393</sup> Because Coleridge makes the distinction between Evangelical and the Arminian/"sober" clergy, he may not have recognized sufficient enough differences between High Church and Latitudinarian traditions and essentially distinguished between Evangelicals and everyone else. While one may initially think that this could cut the other way (i.e., he put together the orthodox in contrast to the Latitudinarians), the larger picture of what we know about the divisions in the Church do not allow for this interpretation. The "High Church" orthodox of his time were almost universally united in their Arminianism, so that he makes this a central doctrinal dividing point would indicate that he is lumping together all Anglicans, regardless of their other differences, who professed this view in opposition to the vision put forward by Evangelicals. This lack of differentiation for non-Evangelicals strengthens my argument in another way since Coleridge demonstrates a familiarity in many places (including the notes on Sedgwick) between various evangelical factions, but does not believe that the differences in other groups warranted distinguishing them as such, suggesting in-group knowledge for Evangelicals that he lacked for other groups in the Church of England.

onward, Coleridge's relationship to the Church of England only strengthened (although he never *completely* lost his ambivalence about his association with the national Church) until he literally returned to communion with the Church in 1827. As will be explored in the final chapters of this work, his return to the Church of England followed relatively closely upon his completion of *Aids to Reflection*. Because this work draws on the Evangelicals' favorite divine (Robert Leighton), expounded a significantly Evangelical theology, *and* employs an Evangelical devotional style, one can infer that Coleridge was able to reconcile himself with the Church *after* he accepted a theological tradition within it with which he could align himself.

While Coleridge may have expressed the sentiment that he was *closest* to the Evangelicals, I still need to explore what he saw as the relationship between this affinity for the Evangelicals and his desire to "unite warmth and light" in the form of ensuring a more organic relationship between faith and reason or – one may say – religion and philosophy. In terms of bare doctrine, Coleridge provides statements of faith that most Evangelicals would have had no problem putting forward as their own. One must recognize, though, that Coleridge's main critique of the Evangelical clergy was their "lack of learning" related to metaphysics and history, and an inability to clearly articulate the foundations of their belief or even a full account of those beliefs themselves.<sup>394</sup> Furthermore, he does in fact go beyond confession of faith to provide a more robust account of these doctrines such that they are understood in terms of his deepening metaphysical views, most specifically in *Aids to Reflection*.

There are of course several complications in trying to locate Coleridge in relationship to Evangelicalism. For instance, if one takes anti-intellectualism as a *necessary* component of

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<sup>394</sup> A perception of a "lack of learning" that could have arisen from an inability to properly ground and articulate points of doctrine may not have indicated less education *per se*, but it is also not entirely reasonable that they would have appeared this way given that the Evangelicals, as they moderated and became more inclusive in the second generation, tended to do so by using ambiguous doctrinal exposition or quick appeals to mystery.



evangelical identity (a position that I would not take), then Coleridge's attempt to more fully develop a philosophical foundation for Christian thought, even if that form of Christianity is Evangelicalism, would never be properly located as "evangelical" – no matter what Coleridge's self-identification was. What appears most helpful from a schematization perspective is that one can take three broad approaches to answering this question. First, the unitive relationship between "warmth and light" is not of equal synthesis, but rather a subordination of the philosophical to the religious. The second would be one of an equal synthesis of the two principles. The third would be a subordination of the religious to the philosophical.

Evidence from his work suggests that Coleridge wanted a synthesis of the first type whereby the only sustainable system of thought is one in which the religious and philosophical are in proper relationship to each other, with the philosophical being subordinated to the religious, and that in its essence Christianity itself is the result of this proper relationship. A look at this relationship makes way for an analysis in the next chapter of Coleridge's theological thought which will in turn show that Coleridge was very likely attempting to provide a philosophical underpinning for Evangelical Anglican theological emphases. Moreover, Coleridge's theological works actually demonstrate even greater doctrinal agreement between Coleridge and the Evangelicals than his statements of faith alone. The following analysis of Coleridge's conception of the relationship between philosophy and religion contextualizes his theological works such that they appear all that much more as attempts to ensure the long-term viability of the Evangelical religious vision by wedding what he saw as the closest thing to "true religion" to a sustaining philosophical foundation.

The controlling image of Coleridge's attempt at uniting "warmth" and "light," and his association of Methodism with the former and Socinianism the latter, seems helpful for

describing the programmatic purpose of his life's endeavor, but it must also be remembered that Coleridge made this claim in a 1799 notebook entry – rather early in his intellectual career. Both because of the early date of this observation, at a time prior to Coleridge's in-depth metaphysical investigations, and because this statement was a passing notebook observation, one should not assume too literal or strict an attempt at a combination of Socinian rationalism and Methodist emotionalism, or that these were meant to be put in an equal relationship with each other. Instead, it seems better to see this sentiment as an inchoate understanding of the division between the will and the intellect in religious thought, and the need for a proper intellectual system that unifies them, since this will prove to be the overriding theme of Coleridge's unfolding intellectual program and the foundation of his critiques of other intellectual trends of his day.<sup>395</sup>

Coleridge certainly has developmental conceptions both of the individual intellect and of intellectual movements within societies that seem driven by the same dynamics, such that an understanding of the intellectual trajectory of humanity provides insight into the intellectual development of individual human beings. Nevertheless, Coleridge believed that this essential connection either went unobserved or underdeveloped in most intellectual histories (at least in

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<sup>395</sup> There are several places where Coleridge seems to affirm the unequal nature of “warmth” and “light,” as well as his preference for the excesses of the evangelical's unenlightened warmth over the Socinian's cold light. In the *Lay Sermons* he stated that while there are those who will allow for a kind of hyper-rationalism (so-called) to hold “in check the more dangerous disease of Methodism,” Coleridge himself more than doubted “of both the positions” that the danger of Methodism was as severe as stated and the relative safety of Socinianism/hyper-rationalism: “I do not think Methodism, Calvinist or Wesleyan [sic], the more dangerous disease; and even if it were, I should deny that it is at all likely to be counteracted by the *rational* Christianity of our modern Alogi λόγος πίστεως ἄλογος who... entitle themselves UNITARIANS” (LS 99-100). Moreover, in a letter from 1822, Coleridge was even more explicit that he saw any threat posed by (Calvinist) Methodism to have been far outpaced and far more scrutinized than the real and deep danger of Socinian tendencies in the Church. In pointing out that in the then panic over the fear of Calvinism people had become suspicious of thinkers at all associated with Calvinism (Leighton in particular), Coleridge points out not only that the rejection of Leighton was unfounded, but also that the threat of Calvinism greatly exaggerated: “since the late alarm respecting Church Calvinism and Calvinistic Methodism,” there has been “a cry of Fire! Fire! in consequence of a red glare on one or two of the windows, from a bonfire of Straw and Stubble in the Church-yard, while the Dry Rot of virtual Socinianism is snugly at work in the Beams and Joists of the venerable Edifice” (CL V 199; the reference to ‘Church Calvinism’ likely indicates the Evangelical Anglicans). Additionally, Coleridge made an implicit reference in *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* to seeing the “warmth” in the light/warmth dichotomy as the better side. With “regard to Christianity itself, like certain plants, I [Coleridge] creep toward the Light, even tho’ it draws me away from the more nourishing Warmth” (SW&F 1118).

Britain), thus providing the impetus for his own lectures on the history of philosophy. One should “in the main

consider Philosophy historically, as an essential part of the history of man, and as if it were the striving of a single mind, under very different circumstances indeed, and at different periods of its own growth and developmental but so that each change and every new direction should have its cause and its explanation in the errors, insufficiency, or prematurity of the proceeding, while all by reference to a common object is reduced to harmony of impressions and total result (LP 5).

Coleridge undertakes this exposition of the history of thought not only to understand the way in which human intellectual development occurs but also to accurately locate philosophy in the larger scheme of human knowledge. He also has a certain proscriptive agenda, desiring to show the negative intellectual and social consequences of disordered philosophy, either in the sense of other forms of thought eclipsing it or when it seeks to take the place of other forms, with religion as the most frequently usurped. Thus, the entire discussion aims at treating the historical relationship between philosophy and religion with the specific goal of demonstrating the correct relationship between them. Such a goal does not lie hidden, but was boldly advertised in the title of the lecture series, which claimed to provide “the Connection of Philosophy with General Civilization; and, More Especially, Its Relations to the History of Christianity” (LP 3).

Philosophy properly speaking begins with the ancient Greeks, and they remain the focus of the discussion of the development of philosophy until the coming of Christianity,<sup>396</sup> but the initial discussion begins with both Greeks and Hebrews. These two groups establish the historical dialectic between pure religion and pure philosophy. The Hebrews represented “a nation purely historical and theocratical” whereby “all their institutions according to their own history were derived not from themselves or any genius arising in themselves but from a

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<sup>396</sup> Christianity provides both the proper synthesis of philosophy and the capacity for properly holding together religion and philosophy.

supernatural agency” (LP 49). Ancient Greek culture<sup>397</sup> was unique in the ancient world for allowing individuals to critically analyze the nearly ubiquitous ancient belief in the divine origins of their own political institutions and theology. For non-Greeks, a sense of the divine ordering of the political and intellectual world arose because they “had received their constitutions and their opinions either by conquest or by imposture, that is by pretence to revelation” (LP 59).<sup>398</sup> The Greeks stood alone by having “formed themselves at once simultaneously, as it were, into republics” such that governing power and political order derived not from divine origin or force of tradition, but from among the people (LP 59). As the attempt to extend rational human faculties to the limits of what they could accomplish under their own power, philosophy arose from an awareness that human reflection on its own could create political arrangements; therefore, “legislation was the first step towards philosophy, or rather it was the first dawning or appearance of it” (LP 59). Coleridge does not spend much time speculating on the precise causal order between this political arrangement and the Greeks’ sense of their history, but concomitant with these conditions for the emergence of a philosophically friendly culture was a profoundly weak and confused understanding of Greek origins among the Greeks themselves. The ancient Greeks “appear about as much perplexed concerning their origin as we at this present time do, and in the various criticisms concerning the planting of Greece each position has its own and almost equal authorities” (LP 49).

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<sup>397</sup> Coleridge here is likely describing something more like a theory of cultural conditioning than a biological conception of race since he does not at any point suggest a fatalism whereby inherent racial characteristics determine individuals in a group to naturally think in a specific way.

<sup>398</sup> The one exception is Israel, since Coleridge believed that Israel shared the same form of political and religious legitimization as other ancient cultures (divine revelation), but was itself unique in that it truly did receive these things through revelation (rather than *pretense* to revelation). Thus, the Greeks were still unique in their political and social organization, but Israel was unique in having a true divine source for its (non-unique) form of organization.

The emergence of these two opposite poles, each representing an incomplete part of a whole, were providentially arranged such that they, “after a series of ages each maturing and perfecting,” would eventually come together and, like the two poles of a magnet, create a whole “comprising the excellencies of both” (LP 50). These two imperfect halves, that of Greek philosophical development, which represented “all that could be evolved out of corrupt nature by its own reason,” and that of Hebraic thought and culture, which represented “a nation bred up by inspiration in a childlike form, in obedience and in the exercise of the will,” would eventually come into contact to form the “unity of which all [our nature’s] excellency and all its hopes depend” (LP 83-4). Furthermore, this movement toward the uniting of opposites, and the need for a unity, represent not only the movement of human thought in history, but “the two great component parts of our nature,” *viz.*, the reason and the will (LP 83). Despite seeing the need for the unification (but not the subsumption of one to the other) of the will and the reason, Coleridge does not believe that these powers (or cultural/intellectual trends) are equal in dignity. Instead, the will is that which is “the higher and more especially godlike” and the reason is the “compeer but yet second to that will” (LP 84).

Before turning to Coleridge’s analysis either of the emergence of Christianity as the union of these fundamental traditions or of his analysis of the religious and philosophical conditions at play in his contemporary Britain, it is necessary first to describe two impulses that seem to propel historical evolution of all human thought: first the human rational drive to understand the nature of the world, leading to a cycle of internal transformations in philosophy, and the drive to properly relate the will and intellect, and therefore religion and philosophy. To begin with, Coleridge believes that philosophy began fundamentally “in the distinction between the subject and the object” (LP 115). The result is that he sees there being “but three kind of

philosophers and more are not possible” (LP 115). There are first “those who give the whole to the subject and make the object a mere result involved in it”; those who “give the whole to the object, and make the subject, that is the reflecting and contemplating, feeling part, the mere result of that;” and finally those “who in very different ways have attempted to reconcile these two opposites” (LP 115). This distinction maps onto the internal philosophical developmental cycle that Coleridge believes continues to repeat itself whereby something like pantheism (associated with pure idealism) gives way to materialism, which in turn yields an attempted synthesis or overcoming of both. In the ancient world, this seems to be the move from the Eleatics to the response of the Atomists and then to the thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

The second dynamic is that of the human drive to properly relate religion and philosophy (which again correspond in the social and larger intellectual world to the inner reality of the will and reason in humans) and the problems that happen when this drive yields a disordered relationship between them (either a reversal of priority or a subsuming of one into the other). In a proper relationship, “these two dearest names to human nature, religion and philosophy, can neither be confounded nor yet can they be separated” (LP 374). To try to cede all that properly belongs to philosophy to religion and thus convert philosophy into religion (or have a religion without philosophy), amounts to giving wholly over to the will ungrounded by the intellect. Without the mediation of the intellect, humans are “left to combine [their] senses with [their] better feelings” and the result is superstition, or “the confounding of the spiritual with the bodily” (LP 375-6). On the other hand, replacing religion with philosophy by attempting to make everything in the world transparent to the rational faculty has always produced “a dreary skepticism which has ended in a sensual delivery of our own being up to the wants and appetites of the present state” (LP 376). Philosophy alone always ends with either atheism or agnosticism,

but these also represent their own kind of superstition since they too mean confounding the spiritual with the bodily (particularly in the case of materialism). While neither religion nor philosophy alone suffices to sustain human development, with both becoming degraded forms when totalized, they still stand in an asymmetrical relationship in terms of deleterious consequences. Religion unmoored from or replacing philosophy tends toward superstition, while philosophy overtaking or replacing religion tends toward both superstition and atheism.

These two dynamics in place let one see how Coleridge understood the emergence of Christianity and its capacity to properly order philosophy and religion and the individual will and intellect. At its most basic, Christianity represented the proper integration of Jewish and Greek thought, with each interpenetrating and informing the deficiencies of the other. This occurred

just at that time when the traditions of history and the oracles of the Jews had combined with the philosophy of the Grecians, and prepared the Jews themselves for understanding their scriptures in a more spiritual light, and the Greeks to give their speculations, that were but the shadows of thought before, a reality in that which alone is properly real (LP 84).

Jewish thinking provided the lens for seeing Christ as the fulfillment of those human needs that Greek (and Roman) philosophy discovered but could not fulfill. The philosophers, but especially the moralists, discovered through reason both the fullness of human vice and the utter inability of humans to remove themselves from that vice. Likewise, philosophy arrived at a speculative view of God, but could not overcome “the pernicious distinction between truth and reality and that which was merely speculative” (LP 356). In response, Christianity provided the solution to those problems reached at the edge of human reason alone by offering a Savior who could extricate humans from their vices and a God who “differed from those of the old philosophers by being no abstraction, no blind truth, but a living God, so at all times truths appear as living truths” (LP 357).

Without detailing Coleridge's conception of intellectual history up until his time, one can still see that he saw his contemporary problematic conditions related to philosophy and religion as the result of this unfolding of both the drive to properly understand the world intellectually and the drive to integrate the intellect and the will. The unfolding attempt to properly relate religion and philosophy within Christianity led to the Reformation and Renaissance and ultimately the "emancipation from the superstitions in at least the northern parts of Europe." However, they also "left the mind open and almost impelled it to real silence" (LP 485). Nevertheless, from this vacuum emerged Lord Bacon, who "appeared not for any one purpose but to purify the whole of the mind from all its errors by having given first that complete analysis of the human soul without which we might have gone on forever weighing one thing after another in scales which we had never examined" (LP 486). Coleridge understood that Bacon, while later generations came to view him as only providing the system of empirical observation foundational for the emergence of the natural scientific method, actually presented the idea that "our perception can apprehend through the organs of sense only the phenomena evoked by the experiment, but that same power of mind, which out of its own laws has proposed the experiment, can judge whether in nature there is a law correspondent to the same" (LP 487). Coleridge thus saw Bacon as the "British Plato" who provided the true philosophical foundation for proper Christianity by delivering "a profound meditation on those laws which the pure reason in man reveals to him, with the confident anticipation and faith that to this will be found to correspond certain laws in nature" (PL 488). Bacon provided a vision for the relationship between the subjective and the objective that proved compatible with Christian revelation.

Several social and intellectual forces emerged that caused Britain to lose Bacon's unitive philosophy. The Reformation and Renaissance ground clearing of error that allowed for a Bacon



to emerge also meant that human minds would attempt to acquire knowledge by only acting “upon its own stores, upon its own faculties.” Thereby “the mind was led to the revival of systems which the better feelings of mankind had exploded for many many centuries” (LP 494). This vacuum explained the reemergence of materialism in the thought of Gassendi and Hobbes. At the same time, the Baconian method of experimental scientific observation (which was to Coleridge only one half of his unitive thought) paved the way for the rapid development of knowledge of the natural world and consequently the sense that this whole world could be known through the natural sciences such that they became “synonymous with philosophy itself” (LP 510). The equation of philosophy with empirical science and the re-emergence of materialist atomism reinforced each other and led farther away from Bacon’s (so conceived by Coleridge) unitive thought. Finally, the material prosperity and economic advancement, coupled with the religious conflict of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, let Locke (for Coleridge not deserving his intellectual reputation) further move people away from Bacon’s correct thinking (as well as that of Milton and Shakespeare). Because Locke’s name was associated with “that of freedom and that of the Revolution,” Britain’s intelligentsia saw his thought as equally liberative from “old” ideas tied up with the old, repressive political order. Locke’s becoming a symbol for “good sense” and properly chastened British philosophy, as well as being a defender of a modest and sober Christianity against the infidelity arising among other philosophers, led to him becoming the model for proper British thought in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the effect that much better philosophical minds could not rise to prominence in Britain (LP 572-3).

With the entire national temperament in Britain so distorted, Coleridge believed that divine providence had arranged that “what had once been distinctions co-existing in each country were now to be a distinction of countries as a whole” (LP 574). Whereas at one time

advancements in commerce and government occurred in one portion of the population and advancements in philosophy and theology in another, now Coleridge saw these partitions lifted to the level of whole nations within a larger world community. While Britain may have had some important intellectual advances with people like Hume showing the logical consequences of Locke's thought, it remained for the Germans, and Kant specifically, to clear the intellectual fog of Lockean philosophy. Kant's careful analysis of the mind as an object of reflection itself, led to the conclusion that the mind's faculties working on sensations give us the "substance" of reality. More importantly, Coleridge took from Kant the demonstration that the will as the "practical reason" is the "higher and nobler" constituent of a person's being which "does not announce itself by arguing but by direct command and precept" (LP 586). This allowed room for a "faith of reason" which disallowed positive proofs of religious truth but also ensured that one could not demonstrate their falsehood either. Kant thus clarified "the nature of religious truth and its connection with the understanding, and made it felt to the full that the reason itself, considered as merely intellectual, was but a subordinate part of our nature; that there was a higher part, the will and the conscience" (PL 587). The result is that "to be good is and ever will be not a mere consequence of being wise but a necessary condition of the process" (PL 587).

Several important conclusions for the argument at hand arise from Coleridge's interpretation of the history of philosophy. First, he affirmed that, whatever his initial views of the need to unite "warmth" and "light," his understanding of reason shifted enough for him to believe that while Methodism could still stand for "warmth," post-Restoration English philosophy could not provide the "light," insofar as light meant "true philosophy." Instead, Coleridge believed that the German Enlightenment provided those minds that could clear a path out of the delusions of English materialism. This point would seem to track with the standard

interpretation that Coleridge merely sought to interpret German Idealism into an English idiom. However, a comparison of his understanding of Bacon and Kant mitigates against such an interpretation. Kant is important, and vitally so, but only in a propaedeutic manner by unsettling the secure foundation of materialism and exclusive empiricism, as well as for properly relating religion and philosophy to each other (similarly relating will and reason to each other in the individual human). However, Kant does not actually provide the true philosophy that should emerge once the ground is cleared. His “true understanding” of Bacon, on the other hand, points to the positive contributions of Bacon’s philosophy itself rather than simply the capacity to lead to a proper understanding of the nature and purpose of philosophy, as was the case with Kant. Coleridge therefore appears to see Kant’s greatness in his capacity to undo the philosophical errors that cloud a true reading of Bacon, but once this is done, one puts away Kant to return to Bacon’s true philosophy.<sup>399</sup>

The way in which Coleridge understands the proper relationship between religion and philosophy supports the idea that he did not want to supplant Evangelical Christianity, but to remain close to or within it and explicate its proper philosophical foundations. As was shown above, Coleridge thought that Christianity, the true religion, could only develop historically after the propaedeutic work of the development of philosophy. However, philosophy in this sense prior to (or after the fact divorced from) Christianity could only ever be *corrupt* philosophy. The emergence of Christianity alone allowed true philosophy to arise, and only if it was subordinated to true Christianity as its “willing servant and helpmate” (LP 325). It is true that Coleridge thought that Christianity would (and did) become simply “religion” and gave way to superstition when it precluded intellectual reflection (LP 375). However, Christianity, as true religion, carries

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<sup>399</sup> I am not trying to make any arguments about the debt Coleridge *in reality* owed to Bacon or Kant, or whether his view of Bacon in reality was Coleridge attributing to Bacon an alien philosophy drawn from German Idealism.

with it “true philosophy” – at least potentially or implicitly. Christianity came into existence as “the divine medium between all the opposite doctrines of the different philosophers” and comprehended “what was true in each” (LP 309). Additionally, “a true religion will necessarily lead to a just philosophy” (LP 360). Finally, Coleridge acknowledges that true knowledge can possibly emerge from “the illiterate and the simple,” such that they convey the truths they have discovered in forms that are difficult to distinguish from the fanatic’s “extravagant and grotesque phantasms” that are “for the most part poor copies and gross caricatures of genuine inspiration” (LP 482). While Coleridge here speaks about modern mysticism in philosophy, one may assume that such a situation could just as easily occur in the realm of religious truth; Coleridge does, after all, allow for superstition and fanaticism as categories in both religion and philosophy. Thus, even Coleridge’s statement that the Evangelicals generally lacked learning would not necessarily mean that they lacked a vision of real Christianity. While he certainly would not have ranked the Evangelicals with Luther, Coleridge’s description of Luther as having eschewed carrying on “a process of fine reasoning” in order to “overthrow the scholastic philosophy and to substitute for it the Word of God” (PL 449) shows at least that Coleridge saw it necessary in the unfolding of Christianity at points to elevate the proclamation of Scripture in language accessible to “the lowest of the low” above technical philosophical disputation. That Coleridge saw himself as providing a metaphysical underpinning for Christian doctrine, and the belief that this union of warmth and light could only be brought about with this underpinning, comes into sharper focus in a statement put forward by Coleridge in his marginal notes on *The Pilgrim’s Progress*: “this very controversy ~~of~~ between the Arminians and Calvinists, in which both are partially right ~~on~~ in what they *affirm*, and both wholly wrong in what they *deny*, is a proof that without *Metaphysics* there can be no *Light* of Faith” (CM I 819-20).

Importantly, if one looks to Coleridge's presentation of Bacon's relationship to the Reformation, and also looks at his understanding of how the intellectual climate of the English Reformation differed from that of the German Reformation, one likely has even more evidence that Coleridge saw himself within Evangelical Anglicanism. Coleridge acknowledges that the emergence of a mind like Bacon only happened after superstition, both in philosophy and religion, had been cleared away. At the same time, he recognized that the English Reformation differed in its intellectual character from what Luther initiated in Germany. Coleridge interpreted Luther's initial salvo against scholasticism through a singular focus on the Word of God as necessary for the removal of scholasticism's *excesses*, but not so much the removal of scholasticism itself<sup>400</sup> (LP 466-7). Despite these excesses, and the need for a genius like Luther to challenge them, Coleridge still regarded the scholastics very highly, stating that they were owed respect for their rightly placed "endeavors to reunite reason and religion by a due subordination of the former to the latter" and that the intellectual force of the Reformation owed much more to Scholasticism than "to the revival of classical literature" (LP 466-7). Additionally, the rejection of Scholasticism was confined to Luther's specific time and place, and rightly "did not extend into England; on the contrary [England's] great divines found in the writings of the Schoolmen the strongest testimonies in their favor" (LP 468). Coleridge believed that a "just philosophy" would arise out of true religion. To repeat, Coleridge both acknowledged that Bacon emerged in Reformation England *and* that this was a Reformation that maintained a more positive relationship to Scholasticism than what was found in Germany. Because of how highly Coleridge regarded Bacon's thought, he likely saw the English Reformation (in contrast to the German) as providing the grounds for Christianity's movement beyond purification from

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<sup>400</sup> I.e. not the actual thought of Aquinas, Scotus, and Occam, but the corrupted reception of these thinkers.

superstition to a positive vision of true Christianity. In other words, Bacon, coming immediately after the English Reformation and during the age of the great Stuart and Caroline divines, would seem the best philosopher to point to as evidence of “true religion” yielding “just philosophy” *if* one wanted to point to the English Reformers as having established true religion, and Coleridge does indeed see Bacon in this way. Because it is precisely the vision of the English Reformers and Calvinist divines that the Anglican Evangelicals invoked as those who taught the pure and general spirit of the Reformation, it does not seem too far of a stretch to locate Coleridge among the principle group in his time that sought to reclaim the spirit of what he perceived as true, positively reformed (and not only purified) Christianity.

A look at Coleridge’s doctrinal summaries as well as the larger theoretical framework for the relationship between religion and philosophy already begins to paint a picture of a thinker with significant affinities with the Anglican Evangelicals. While it would be premature at this point to identify Coleridge *as* an Evangelical, some of the most significant obstacles to such an identification have at least been removed. While seeing “warmth” and “light” as incomplete parts of a necessary whole, he believed it better to imbue warmth with more light than to try to give light more warmth. He saw Evangelicals as closest to his own creed and as alone the group saving the Church of England (no less than from an inordinate rationalism). Moreover, with the close of this chapter, the stage has been set for understanding how Coleridge moved beyond doctrinal summaries to present a philosophically supported theological demonstration and exposition of these doctrines. I believe that this more developed theological vision only serves to demonstrate that Coleridge accepted doctrinal positions associated with the Evangelicals that he did not make explicit in his doctrinal summaries *and* that he frequently employed a method

consistent with how Evangelicals developed their theology. I thus turn in the next chapter to expositing that more developed theological vision and showing its connection to Evangelicalism.

## CHAPTER 5

### COLERIDGE'S PHILOSOPHICAL, EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY (PART II)

Chapter four concluded with Coleridge's understanding of the history of philosophy, particularly as this development influenced and was influenced by the human attempt to arrive at the proper relationship between philosophy and religion. The way in which Coleridge sees the importance of certain figures and movements (most prominently Bacon, Kant, and the Reformation) itself provides evidence that Coleridge had Evangelical propensities, as did his sense that the consequences of a disjointed will ("warmth") and intellect ("heat") were not equally deleterious. This discussion also makes possible an analysis of Coleridge's more detailed and thoroughly argued (if not always systematic) theological work, and an analysis of this work makes Coleridge's affinities with Evangelical thought that much clearer. Coleridge's history of philosophy provides a preliminary introduction to his theology and theological anthropology insofar as it points to his view of the relationship between the powers of the human mind. His conception of the nature of the human intellect provides a helpful entryway into his theology precisely because it is in the intellect as will and reason that Coleridge locates the image of God in humans, which in turn provides a logical entry point for a conversation about his Doctrine of God, the purpose of human life, the fall and original sin, incarnation, and atonement.

Before discussing the relationship between God and humanity – which presupposes the purpose of human life, the fall, and the proper means of restoration of fallen humanity – I need to give a cursory description of Coleridge's understanding of human psychology, i.e., the



distinction between the reason, the understanding, and the will.<sup>401</sup> Coleridge would come to see the most significant division between the powers of the human mind as that between the reason and the understanding, in large part because he saw some of the most egregious errors in 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy as flowing from the conflation or misunderstanding of these two. At the most general level, the understanding is that power that organizes sense impressions into unitive experience and that abstracts therefrom. One can further draw a conceptual distinction in this power between two “forces.” The lower force is that which is held in common with “higher animals” and is a “further development of instinct.”<sup>402</sup> The lower is not an act so much as the set of rules that passively organize individual sensations into unitive experience. This is “understanding” disconnected from reason (as Coleridge conceives reason; more on that to come). It is the second, higher, and active sense of understanding that can be considered properly (and possibly exclusively) “human” understanding. This is the ability for active judgement according to the senses, meaning an active capacity to abstract more general principles from sense information. This “active” understanding is higher, and properly human, because it only exists in conjunction with reason, and it is reason that makes possible active differentiation.<sup>403</sup> Importantly, “lower” and “higher” understanding are prominent in individuals in an inverse relationship with each other, and this is possible because they differ in degree rather than kind.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> It would be a distortion to call these distinct “somethings” in Coleridge’s psychology “faculties.” Owen Barfield points out that it would be more correct to distinguish between various “powers” of the mind, since Coleridge repeatedly refuted the claim that “perception, imagination, fancy, understanding, etc.” are faculties because the exertion of any of these powers requires the use of multiple human faculties, and different “powers” could make use of the same “faculties” (Barfield, 92).

<sup>402</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 97.

<sup>403</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 98-9.

<sup>404</sup> Thus, each lower state contains the higher in potentiality, such that “instinct cannot be explained without our seeing it as potential understanding,” and “understanding cannot be explained without our seeing it as developed instinct” (Barfield, 98-9).

Reason, however, *does* differ from understanding in kind. As Coleridge explains in *Aids to Reflection*, reason is that “power of universal and necessary Convictions, the Source and Substance of Truths above Sense, and having there evidence in themselves” (AR 216). Reason likewise has a twofold differentiation, only now with a further internal twofold division. The first distinction occurs when one considers the object of reason as either necessary or conditional: when the object of reason is “contemplated distinctly in reference to *formal* (or abstract) truth, it is the *speculative* Reason; but in reference to *actual* (or moral) truth, as the fountain of Ideas and the *Light* of the conscience, we name it the *practical* Reason” (AR 217). The other distinction is between what Barfield refers to as the *positive* (*lux intellectus*) and *negative* (*lumen a luce*) reason. Reason positively conceived is conscious apprehension of the Ideas of Reason in an act of contemplation, whereas negatively it is the “irradiating” of the understanding, allowing passive understanding to ascend to properly active or human understanding.<sup>405</sup>

While one may loosely call reason a human power, one can only do so in a very qualified fashion. One can rightly speak of multiple distinct instances of “understanding,” with these being as numerous as the number of individual beings with understanding. There are similarly many Ideas contained within Reason. However, there is only one, universal Reason.<sup>406</sup> Furthermore, Reason is present in all things and orders all of nature. It can be this universal precisely because Reason is the Divine *Logos*, the creative Word, which is both the basis of life and of light (in the sense of illumination) and the second person of the Trinity.<sup>407</sup> At the same time, the

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<sup>405</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 105-6.

<sup>406</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 106. When not capitalized, “reason” refers to this universal considered as though it were a power of the human mind. When capitalized, “Reason” refers to Reason in itself as the universal.

<sup>407</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 113.

understanding stands in a unique relationship to reason since it is the only thing in nature that Reason is present *to* (rather than present *in*) and thus uniquely constitutes individual humans.

In terms of this unique relationship to individual humans, Reason serves as that which creates the possibility of individual human subjectivities, but it can do this only by remaining distinct from any individual, i.e., by being *superindividual*. As mere negative reason, which acts on human understanding unconsciously, Reason becomes the principle of abstraction that allows the understanding to generalize and see objects in terms of “universals.”<sup>408</sup> However, positive reason, i.e., Reason as the understanding is conscious of it, provides an awareness that Reason itself is transcendent and we are given access to, but do not create, universal Ideas. In other words, in its positive dimension, Reason becomes the awareness that Reason itself is one and therefore the ideas of Reason are not our “private property.”<sup>409</sup> Without the development of a conception of positive reason, the growth of negative reason’s capacity only provides detachment, a purely mechanistic view of nature, and ultimately the end of the capacity for true knowledge: When there is no sense that Reason transcends us, “it gives no assurance of an external world.”<sup>410</sup> However, reflection on the concept of contradiction can make room for the understanding to come to an awareness of the positive function of Reason. When one gains an awareness that the same thing grounds our subjective understanding *and* the order of the

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<sup>408</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 109. This occurs through an awareness of the principle of contradiction, which contains within itself both the concepts of “sameness” and “difference,” which are necessary to know whether two concepts in the mind contradict each other. In *the Friend*, Coleridge stated that negative reason “consists wholly in man’s power of seeing, whether any two conceptions, which happen to be in his mind, are, or are not, in contradiction with each other” (F I 159).

<sup>409</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 108.

<sup>410</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 110.

objective world, one should come to understand that this thing (Reason) must transcend and have a certain independence from both subjective consciousness and the objective world.<sup>411</sup>

Because of this superindividuality, and the fact that Reason is present both to and in the understanding, it differs in kind from all other human powers (and indeed all the powers in the rest of creation). The better way to describe Reason in relationship to the human psyche, then, is not “as a power, but rather as a gift – a gift which the human understanding enjoys, and by virtue of which it is human.”<sup>412</sup> Furthermore, only in its negative function, conceived of as more akin to an energizing power, can the human (through the understanding) be said to “possess” Reason. In its positive dimension, humans can apprehend, through the power of understanding in an act of reflection, the Ideas of Reason. In this way, apprehension of the Ideas of Reason is more analogous to sensation than the process of “reasoning” as the term is commonly used, with the understanding functioning analogously to sense organs.<sup>413</sup>

The possibility of unpacking Coleridge’s doctrine of God and his understanding of the Image of God in humans requires a discussion of what Coleridge considers the even more fundamental distinguishing feature of humans in creation: the will. Coleridge says in a note on a copy of his work *the Statesman’s Manual* that as important as the distinction of the reason and understanding is for his thought, he still maintained “the Primacy of the Will, as deeper than and (in the order of *thought*) antecedent to Reason. See St. John’s Gospel 1.18” (SM 67n). One

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<sup>411</sup> This ground also provides the basis for understanding that subjectivity and objectivity are not completely heterogeneous and that some union between them is possible.

<sup>412</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 95.

<sup>413</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, 97. Hence, when Coleridge describes the ascending and descending functions of the human psyche, he places “sense” as the lowest rung and “Reason” as the highest, but he also provides two lists, with one highest to lowest and one lowest to highest, such that the reader is meant to associate the highest and lowest as analogous to one another. This presentation and understanding of psychology fits with one of Coleridge’s favorite Maxims – “extremes meet” – and a belief in polarity penultimate to unity as a fundamental logical principle.

cannot talk about individual “wills” in humans without first describing the primal Will, which turns out to be God. The will is that which is “essentially causative of its own reality” and is therefore prior to all things, including intellection, in the order of existence (SW&F 777). At the same time, for this self-causative power to be truly Will, it must always and necessarily exist in conjunction with intellect. This is so because a “will” without intellect would be action directed by something external to itself, and therefore would not be causative of its own reality. The idea of self-causation implies the positing of something somehow “other” to direct this self-causation, but it cannot be *absolutely* other and in some important way must be the same as the Will. This seems to be what Coleridge means when he says that we must see that the Will posits both “alterity” and “the identity of these two” (SW&F 779). Thus, Will in the order of thought is prior to Intellect, but the two must always be joined: “the Will is neither abstracted from intelligence nor can Intelligence be conceived of as not grounded and involved in the Will” (SW&F 779).<sup>414</sup>

Now, only God is Will in the truest sense of that which is absolutely self-causative. Putting his conception of the causal relationship between God and creation into the mouth of God, Coleridge says: “The whole host of heaven and earth, from the mote in the sunbeam to the archangel before the throne of glory, owe their existence to a Will not their own, but my own Will is the ground and sufficient cause of my own existence” (OM 198). Nevertheless, Coleridge clearly indicates that there *are* individual wills in human beings, even if they are not initially self-causative.<sup>415</sup> Instead, there is in the created individual something analogous, at least potentially, to the primal unity of the Absolute Will and Reason. The analogue to uncreated unity

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<sup>414</sup> This is one of the points whereby Coleridge sees himself as moving beyond, for instance, Schelling. Rather than an absolute Will that produces intellect in a kind of Neoplatonic emanation, Coleridge sees Will and Intellect as relative terms like “Father” and “Son”; thus, one has the beginnings of Coleridge’s understanding of the Trinity.

<sup>415</sup> Here I bracket the question of a *free* will, since this concept is bound up with Coleridge’s conception of creation, Fall, and redemption.

in creation is the synthesis between the universal and individual by the “subordination of the former to the latter” (OP 81). Coleridge stands with most of the Christian tradition in holding to the incommunicability of the uncreated Will to what is created, so for this analogue to be possible, it must be something gifted by the Absolute Will to the individual will as a potential to be actualized: “as this likeness is not self-existent or necessary, but the product of the individual Will, then if it existed originally in man, it must have been given by some other Will as the incentive momentum or condition, in order to the commencement and continuance of the act by the individual Will” (OM 83).

Importantly, human will is a kind of causative power for action or thought, but not all causative power is will. Coleridge also allows for volition, or the power for action or thought within living organisms that arises from the various motive forces that are inherently part of the living organism but do not necessarily come about from distinct thought, and this seems to fall under the name of instinct (AR 247). Will properly speaking involves not only selection, but choice, meaning the power for activity or thinking themselves directed by thought<sup>416</sup> (AR 247).

One must take a break from Coleridge’s religious psychology to talk about his doctrines of God and creation, since his conceptions of faith and conscience require more detailed descriptions of God and creation than do will and intellect. Any description of Coleridge’s doctrine of God during his return to orthodoxy *must* give due room to his understanding of God as Trinity. Coleridge himself placed the Trinity at the center of his understanding of the Christian

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<sup>416</sup> Because Coleridge believes that humans continue to have wills even if they are not free wills (which requires the will being fully directed by the ideas of Reason), thought here would be whatever arises from either the apprehension of the Ideas of Reason or of the understanding informed by the negative function of reason.

faith: his return to orthodoxy was also a movement from accepting the Trinity as a philosophically defensible postulate to its being an essential article of faith.<sup>417</sup>

The discussion of the Absolute Will provides the necessary starting point for understanding Coleridge's conception of the Trinity. In a short work entitled "On the Trinity," Coleridge begins with the description of the fundamental description of God as IDENTITY, and as such the "*absolute* subjectivity, whose only attribute is the GOOD; whose only definition is, that which is essentially causative of *all* possible true Being – Ground and Cause," which is equivalent to "the Absolute WILL" (SW&F 1510-11).<sup>418</sup> In this work, Coleridge develops then how each distinction or designation of God (with God as identity) has a certain name/names, a divine attribute associated with that distinction, and a definition. As was seen in the discussion of Absolute Will, being self-causative *qua* Will requires positing something that is at once distinct from and identified with Will. Thus, Coleridge believes that the affirmation of the Absolute Subject as Absolute Will and Cause entails a distinction (but not a division) within this fundamental unity. Coleridge introduces the *relative* subjectivity and objectivity within the absolute Subjectivity, which he refers to with the principles of *Ipseity* and *Alterity*<sup>419</sup>. God as

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<sup>417</sup> In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge affirmed that he first "considered the *idea* of the Trinity a fair scholastic inference from the being of God as creative intelligence," but in such a way that "seeing in the same no practical or moral bearing, I confined it to the schools of philosophy" (BL 204). Coleridge later came to realize that "I cannot doubt, that the difference of my metaphysical notions from those of Unitarians in general contributed to my final re-conversion to the whole truth in Christ" like how "the books of certain Platonic philosophers (*libri quorundam Platoniorum*) commenced the rescue of St. Augustine's faith from the same error aggravated by the far darker accompaniment of the Manichæan heresy" (BL 205). This admission provides a biographical component to the point that Coleridge could see the doctrine of the Trinity on either side of the dividing line between natural religion and distinctive Christian belief, depending on whether the doctrine emerged as essential to an understanding of the Living God impacting the Christian life or as merely a necessary postulate in purely speculative philosophy.

<sup>418</sup> This is Coleridge's affirmation of God considered in God's unity. Robert Barth raises the issue of whether Coleridge assumes a Divine nature behind/independent of the Trinity, thus introducing a quadrinity or some form of modalism. While I could argue for why this is not the case (it appears that the distinctions in the Absolute Will and Subject are real and constitutive), answering this question is not necessary for the subject matter at hand.

<sup>419</sup> Acceptable translations may be "itself-ness"/"itself-ity" and "otherness."

Ipseity is the “eternally self-affirmant, self-affirmed: the I AM, in that I AM” (SW&F 1511). This is God as “the FATHER; the *relatively* subjective; whose attribute is, the HOLY ONE, whose definition is, the essential Finific<sup>420</sup> in the form of the Infinite. It is under the form of the I AM, Father, and the Holy that the Absolute Subject, the Good, and Absolute Will “co-eternally begets the divine ALTERITY,” who is the “Supreme BEING” and “The Supreme REASON – The Jehovah. The Son. The Word” (SW&F 1511). This is intellect that must necessarily be identified with Absolute Will for it to be will while also being distinguished from it. The definition of Alterity, Son, Reason, and Word, is “the PLEROMENA of Being, whose essential poles are Unity and Distinctity; or the *essential* Infinite in the *form* of the Finite” and who is “relatively OBJECTIVE,” meaning the object in relationship to the subject that is the I AM (SW&F 1511).

A third is necessary as well, that which in relationship to the relatively subjective and relatively objective participates in both, i.e., “the great Idea needs only for its completion a co-eternal which is both, i.e., relatively Objective to the Subjective, relatively Subjective to the Objective” (SW&F 1512). The reasoning here appears to be that to have a meaningful unity with differentiation, some principle must share in the two opposites which is not simply one or the other so that they are not subsumed into either the opposite or some deeper “true” unity on the one hand, or, on the other, to prevent complete heterogeneity of these opposites such that they could never form a union.<sup>421</sup> Thus, that which partakes of and acts as the unifying force between both subjectivity and objectivity is the COMMUNITY, i.e., “the eternal LIFE, which is LOVE – the Spirit” (SW&F 1512). In Coleridge's attempt to regularize varying biblical language, the Spirit

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<sup>420</sup> I.e., that which limits or is limiting; possibly the principle of limitation that must therefore transcend limitation.

<sup>421</sup> Insofar as the Trinity is the pattern for the logic that permeates creation, this would inform Coleridge's opposition to both absolute monism and absolute dualism.



is, “relative to the Father, the *Spirit* of Holiness, the Holy *Spirit*” (SW&F 1512). Relative to the Son, the Spirit is “the Spirit of Truth whose attribute is Wisdom. Sancta Sophia” (SW&F 1512).

Several distinctions should be made to avoid misunderstandings about Coleridge’s conception of God, all of which show that he desired to expound a fairly traditional conception of God’s transcendent existence. Coleridge sought a conception of God that can provide a foundation for something closer to the German Idealist conception of the world without a corresponding movement in the direction of a process doctrine of God<sup>422</sup> found in Schelling or Hegel, or, in more contemporary theology, Moltmann. First, while Coleridge made Will prior in the order of knowing and in some sense in terms of “dignity,” he saw the “Calvinist’s God of supreme power” as a distortion of the ultimate, and necessary, connection between Will and Intellect because it substituted a false conception of an independent Will that is simple and unrestrained power.<sup>423</sup> Additionally, Coleridge believed that as Absolute Will, “Deus est Ens super Ens [God is being above being], the *Ground* of all Being, but therein likewise absolute Being, in that he is the eternal self-affirming, the I Am in that I am; and that the key of this mystery is given to us in the pure idea of the will, as the alone *Causa Sui* [cause of itself]” (CM II 324). God is both absolute Being and the ground of created being. Finally, the divine attributes become the foundation and ground of the attributes of the finite world without either being identified with them or being wholly heterogeneous with them: “Reason does not necessarily

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<sup>422</sup> I believe that, while he never states this, process views of God (by making the realization of God’s own being, either necessarily or through some “self-limitation” on God’s part) make God necessarily part of the order of creation, which would for Coleridge subsume the world into God.

<sup>423</sup> I think this distinction helps to illuminate the main distinction between Karl Barth, whose more thorough-going Calvinism led him to wed a particular interpretation of total depravity and God’s sovereignty to a Neo-Kantian psychology, and Coleridge, who always sees will and intellect as intrinsically linked. Thus, Coleridge can keep a more traditional Augustinian and Thomistic sense that God’s omnipotence and sovereignty do not entail a complete voluntarism, but rather that the co-occurrence of will and intellect allowing one to say that what is truly irrational is not a “something” that God cannot do, but rather is nothing at all and thus no constraint on God’s omnipotence.

*exclude the Finite*, whether in Time or in Space, in Figure or in Number, because it *includes* them *eminenter* – thus the Prime Mover of the Material Universe is affirmed to *contain* all Motion as its cause, but not to *be* or to *suffer* Motion in itself” (SW&F 839-40).

This overview of Coleridge’s doctrine of God allows for a consideration of creation and the Fall. In his discussion of the nature of creation, Coleridge devotes most of his energy to what makes the distinction between God and creation possible while also allowing for relationship between them, as well as what the duty of the creature is toward the creator. Divine Ideas provide the pattern for created reality as well as God’s knowledge of that reality. An Idea properly speaking is “not simply knowledge or perception as distinguished from the thing perceived: it is a realizing knowledge, a knowledge causative of its own reality; it is life, and the life is the light of men” (OM 223). The Divine or Eternal Ideas can be conceptually distinguished by us as “Distinctities in the pleromena” (SW&F 1511); however, they are not “parts” out of which the Reason/Eternal Word is composed. Any distinct Idea that we are given to perceive “in” the Reason is in some way a “refracting” of the one, unitive Divine Idea; a “divine Idea is the Omnipresence or Omniscience represented intelligentially in some one of the possible forms, which are the plentitude of the divine Intelligence” (OM 223). While they can be spoken of as in some way distinct, one should always keep in mind that they are “One with the <co->Eternal Act, by which the absolute Will self-realized begets its Idea as the Other self” (OM 223).<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> One, if not the main, problem that Coleridge sought to avoid was running intellectually aground on “atheism on the one side, or a world without a God, and Pantheism, or a world that is itself God” (OM 221). The fundamental distinction in God, the Reason/Logos/Son, makes possible the further distinctions (but not divisions) *within* Reason, and these two “moments” of distinction provide for the possibility of differentiation between God and creation and then within the created order. It is these Divine Ideas as the refraction of the Logos in Godself that also constitute God’s knowledge, not only of Godself, but also of all that is not God. In this affirmation, Coleridge was rejecting either that one could conceive of “God without Ideas” or the theory that God “knows the universal only” and not particulars (OM 223). The first would be tantamount to rejecting the intellection necessary for the Absolute Will to be absolute, which would “destroy the very conception of God,” and the second would be “more absurd than to say of <attribute to> a man perfect insight into a genus with an entire ignorance of its species” (OM 223-4).

The purpose of human beings and the possibility of falling away from that purpose are intimately linked. All that is not God came to exist because of God's causative power working from the pattern of the Divine Ideas in the Divine Reason. Likewise, the constitutive identity of Will and Reason in God cannot be replicated in creation, but rather must be modeled analogously in the possible synthesis of the individual will and the Divine Reason by the individual will's submitting to determination by universal Reason. "This possible synthesis is the only conceivable likeness, or image, of the necessary identity of the absolute and self-originating universal" (OM 81). Here lies the groundwork for an explanation of the possibility of the Fall from our created nature. The subordination of the individual will to the Divine Reason, and thus conformity to the Divine Will, can never be necessary and must remain always only an actualized or non-actualized (contingent) possibility; that this is the case arises from the inherent nature of *individual* or *particular* will. The essence of a created being endowed with will properly recognizing that its existence comes from God and not from itself lies precisely in its subordination of its individual will to Reason. This recognition itself requires an act of the will because it requires the *choice* to be subordinated to Reason. Since being a properly actualized created will presupposes an act of will, "there must be, if the actual Will be a Will, a potentiality of willing the universal under the predominance of the particular instead of willing the particular solely as the glory and presentation of the plenitude of the distinctions of the universal" (OM 237). At least initially for every created being endowed with will there is the possibility of realizing the synthesis by willing the subordination of the will to reason, but "it must be eternally possible for all forms of being not absolute and universal to will itself for its Self," i.e., to "will a Self that is not God" (OM 237-8). Thus, the purpose and proper character of humanity is union with the Divine Will through subordination of the individual will to Reason, as seen in

Coleridge's affirmation that if this union is lost or not obtained, "the restoration of to this, his proper character, must be the proper duty, the moral destination, of man" (OM 83).

While consideration of how one acquires faith given human corruption must wait until after the discussion of the consequences and nature of the fall, as well as of redemption, the whole groundwork for Coleridge's understanding of faith has been provided. Coleridge rejects any definition of faith that limits it to a form of mere belief in some body of propositions, for "if the mere acquiescence in Truth, uncomprehended and unfathomed, were sufficient, few indeed would be the vicious and the miserable, in this country at least, where speculative Infidelity is, Heaven be praised, confined to a small number" (LS 47).<sup>425</sup> Rather than seeing faith as primarily a matter of belief or intellectual assent, it should be understood in the sense of "fidelity." In his "Essay on Faith," Coleridge defines faith in its fullest sense as "*Fidelity* to our own Being as far as such Being is not and cannot become an object of sense" (SW&F 834). Faith as fidelity is conceived of as an ascending series of more and more general ways in which one can be faithful, with the ultimate, most universal, and all-encompassing form being "fidelity, fealty, allegiance of the moral Creature to God, in opposition to all usurpation, and in resistance to all temptations to the placing any other claim above, or equal with, ~~the~~ our fidelity to God" (SW&F 843). Faithfulness to our own being entails the true recognition that we are not the source of our own being and that our purpose is to willingly subordinate our will to God; faith is another way of describing "the Synthesis of the Reason and the Individual Will" (SW&F 844). As this synthesis of the will and Reason, faith has aspects of both. In relationship to the will, it is not one act of choosing among many, but rather "it relates to the Whole Moral Man, & is to be exerted in each

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<sup>425</sup> This sentiment closely mirrors Wesley's observation that he had encountered very few intentional atheists and by far the much larger problem was the vast body of *practical* atheists, who, like Coleridge's description of the vast multitude, merely acquiesce to uncomprehended truth without a corresponding living relationship.

and all of his constituent or incident faculties and tendencies” (SW&F 844). As it relates to the union with Reason, “it must be a Light, a form of Knowing, a beholding of Truth” (SW&F 844).

Coleridge further clarifies his understanding of faith as it relates to St. Paul’s use of the term. He distinguishes faith from the Beatific Vision, which is “that state of the Will and its affections, which considered in its own essence or substance, [is] uncorrupted from within and untroubled from without” (SW&F 845). Faith is the same substance, “i.e., the same in nature and personal identity,” as the Beatific Vision, but as it occurs in our earthly state, “as struggling with temptations from without and its own imperfections from within” (SW&F 844). In other words, Coleridge sees the Beatific Vision and faith as having the same object beheld and the same activity – both a spiritual apprehension of God and all else in God – but they differ in the *clarity* of that vision.<sup>426</sup> Furthermore, Coleridge wants to distinguish between the act of spiritual apprehension, i.e., the actual *vision*, be it the Beatific Vision or Faith, and the description of the state in which the beholder exists while doing the beholding. In the Beatific Vision, it is improper to say that human beings are happy, which implies “pleasures *out* of our selves,” but rather that we *are* Holy and Blessed, which are two ways of describing that “*Identity* of Act and Being,” with Holiness being considered “as a habit of Action” and Blessedness being “the state of Being” (SW&F 846). Because Faith is the state of this vision considered insofar as the conditions of this world prevent full clarity in apprehension, the result is something analogous to the state of beatitude and holiness, viz., the Evidence of Faith, which is an “intuitive Assurance” of that which will be seen clearly in the Beatific Vision.

In his scriptural discussion of faith, Coleridge does slightly modify his understanding of this concept from how he explained it in the “Essay on Faith.” Faith does not merely describe the

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<sup>426</sup> This is likely an allusion to the Pauline sense of us only seeing in a mirror darkly in this body.

union of the Individual Will and Reason, although it can only exist in that union. Instead, just as Holiness and Beatitude describe the two ways of looking at the one unity of Act and Being in our final uncorrupted state, so too is there a similar relationship between Love and Faith:

From all this you may see how utterly impossible it is that Faith in the scripture sense should be seated in the Understanding only – and how different it is from mere Belief, or acquiescence in the Truth of a thing. Likewise, you will comprehend how what St Paul affirms *exclusively* of Faith, St John affirms *exclusively* of Love; which would be a direct contradiction, if Faith and Love be not the same Thing contemplated from two points of view. The self-same Position of the same Sun is vertical to the countries under the Line, and central to the solar System. Call the Identity of the Will and the Reason, of the Spiritual Heart and the spiritual Eye, *xy*: —when I think of *xy* chiefly in relation to the *Will*, to the Spiritual *Heart*, I call it Love; when I think of it in relation to the *Reason*, to the Spiritual *Eye*, I call it Faith. But both are one, and each is the other (SW&F 846-7).

Something that is intimately intertwined with the synthesis of the individual Will and the Reason, and thus of Faith and Love, but which is not to be conflated with any of these things, is Conscience. Conscience is “neither reason, religion, or will, but an *experience* (*sui generis*) of the coincidence of the human will with reason and religion” (LS 66-7). It is “a testifying state, best described in the words of our liturgy, as THE PEACE OF GOD THAT PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING” (LS 67).<sup>427</sup> Through conscience “the Will of God, which is one with the Supreme Intelligence, is revealed” to individuals (SW&F 844). When the Individual Will and Reason are synthesized, conscience produces this testifying state that can be thought of as the Peace that Passeth All Understanding. Coleridge describes the conscience as functioning prescriptively, implying that this testifying state of peace accompanies the thoughts and actions of the person following the Will of God. However, it cannot be merely a testifying state, because he also acknowledges that it can function “as absolving or condemning,” and thus provides the “Consciousness of the subordination or insubordination, the harmony or the discord, of the Personal Will of Man with his reason, as the representative of the Will of God” (SW&F 844).

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<sup>427</sup> Coleridge at times speaks of conscience as akin to a spiritual organ and at other times as the resultant state.

I now can and need to describe Coleridge's conception of the Fall, sin, and corruption. Coleridge understands Sin, in line with the Augustinian tradition, as not fundamentally individual acts that go contrary to God's divinely decreed law, but rather as "the finite will's deliberate refusal to acknowledge its essential dependence on the Absolute Will" and thus the individual will's attempt to found its self in something other than God.<sup>428</sup> Coleridge believes that such a description of Sin also provides the means of describing the possibility of evil. Evil cannot be in or proceed from God, "since in God all Good is, and to will the contrary of God is to will Evil" (OM 238). Evil must exist, though, since without Evil there "is no Guilt, no rightful punishment, no other distinction than Pain and Pleasure," and without this supposition the whole system of religion would be rendered purposeless (OM 238-9). Evil does exist, and cannot have come from God, so it must have come from something created. For something to originate, it must have been from an act of the will, for "in the Will alone causation inheres" (OM 238). If not from the Divine Will, then evil must have come from some created will. Thus, Coleridge concludes that evil came about in the created order because of the individual will not willing itself to be grounded in God.

I will speak about Coleridge's conception of original sin shortly, but I think it helpful first to describe what Coleridge believes are the *consequences* of a sinful will, wherever and whenever it may arise. To begin with, Coleridge held that sin has ontological consequences. An individual will choosing to found itself in something other than God means realizing a kind of contradiction – "the result can be no otherwise expressed, as far as it can be expressed, than that

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<sup>428</sup> Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, 112.

self became, which was not God nor One with God. The potential was actualized, ~~but~~ <yet> not as actual, but by a strange yet appropriate contradiction as potential” (OM 247).<sup>429</sup>

Coleridge also affirmed a belief in Hell as a state after this life in which there is continued individual consciousness and positive pain for the unredeemed.<sup>430</sup> Coleridge took no pleasure in this position, and he seems to have only come to it with great difficulty because it was unavoidably scriptural and because of the metaphysical consequences for rejecting it. He acknowledged that some “Arminian Divines have asserted that the penalty inflicted on Adam and continued to his posterity was simply the loss of immortality, Death as the utter extinction of personal Being” and that on this scheme “the *Penalty* resolves itself into the *Consequence*, and this the natural and (*naturally*) inevitable Consequence of Adam’s Crime” (AR 305-6). He sees good reason to hold this position and states that “immortality [is] seen by them (and not, I think, without good reason) as a supernatural attribute, and its loss therefore involved in the forfeiture of super-natural graces” (AR 306). This position has the advantage of emphasizing God’s mercy, and Coleridge believed that teaching this doctrine could prove more helpful for driving people toward repentance than a belief in positive eternal punishment: “The doctrine would be a far stronger motive than the present: for no man will believe eternal misery of himself – but millions would admit that if they did <not> amend, they would be undeserving of living forever” (CM V

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<sup>429</sup> Coleridge has the work of prevenient grace in mind here, or something like Rahner’s conception that the “no” to God cannot be commensurate with God’s “yes” to our existence, since Coleridge believes that even in the state of sin humans continue to have both a kind of existence and will. He indicates that one of the results of grounding the self in something other than God is subordination of the Reason to the understanding, or the assumption that the human powers of intellection are the highest arbiters of reality.<sup>429</sup> At the same time, the human understanding, for it to be properly human, must have the Reason present to it (even if the individual is unconscious of this presence). However, Reason in humans is “the Presence of the Holy Spirit to a finite Understanding” and it is only given as a gift and not a right, meaning that God graciously continues to preserve humans not only in bare existence, but in what makes them distinctively human.

<sup>430</sup> Barth points out that there is at least one point where Coleridge may indicate that Hell may not involve the continuation of individual consciousness; this however seems to be a singular exception (Barth, 192).



601). However, Coleridge held that there were “so many [biblical] texts” that countered the idea of Hell as only a loss of immortality (CM V 601). Furthermore, this position gave him further pause because of “the countenance it seems to give to the doctrine of Materialism” (AR 306).<sup>431</sup>

Willing evil, which is to say sinning, rules out the possibility of freedom. Still following the Augustinian tradition, Coleridge believes that freedom properly conceived is not simply the capacity to decide, even willfully, between various options. Following Milton, Coleridge assigns the term “arbitrement” to this power of the will to choose between alternatives (OM 80).

Freedom, a properly free will, only occurs in the realization of human purpose through the subordination of the individual will to the will of God (OM 144). On the other hand, “a will cannot be free to choose evil – for in the very act it forfeits it’s [sic] freedom, and so far becomes a corrupt Nature, self-enslaved” (CN 5555).<sup>432</sup>

Now, once the will chooses evil by subordinating itself to something other than God, is it within human power to reverse this decision and choose to properly submit the individual will to Reason? Coleridge’s answer is an unequivocally “No.” He clearly rejects the possibility of some inherent human capability to restore a will that has chosen evil. He professes “a deep conviction that Man was and is a *fallen* Creature, and not by accidents of bodily constitution, or any other

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<sup>431</sup> Coleridge, while believing the use of the fear of Hell acceptable as a motivator in the Christian life, challenged Wesley and others who overemphasized the idea of Hell as entailing *physical* pain. Wesley’s emphasis on “The Lake, the Brimstone &c are indeed much to be regretted; because they counter-act the very object in view – that of drawing the Soul inward on its own state & essence” (CM V 188). Instead, the pain and sorrow of Hell “in its unutterable intensity, though the language that describes it is all necessarily figurative, is there exhibited as resulting chiefly, if not wholly, from the withdrawal of the *light of God’s countenance*, and a banishment from his *presence!*” (CL III 482).

<sup>432</sup> It is unclear whether Coleridge would always consider the loss of freedom a *consequence* of Sin because of the seeming asymmetry between self that has subordinated itself to God’s will and a will that sought to constitute itself through something else. As was described above, a proper relationship with God requires the *continual* decision to be subordinated to the Will of God, so it makes sense to say that “a Will *can* choose evil; but in the moment of such choice ceases to be a *free* will” (CN 5555). At the same time, in a fundamental act of self-constitution, it is not so much possible for a will to *lose* its freedom in choosing evil, but rather it loses the possibility of freedom. In either case, Coleridge understands that Sin entails either the loss of a free will or the loss of the possibility of a free will.

cause, which *human* Wisdom in a course of ages might be supposed capable of removing, but diseased in his *Will*" (AR 139-40). This sentiment is reinforced by the way in which Coleridge conceives of the need for, and the nature of, redemption. Our alienation from God is such that, owing to the particular character of will, what is needed is "an Agent who can at once act *on* the Will as an exciting cause, *quasi ab extra*; and *in* the Will, as the *condition* of its potential, and the ground of its actual, Being" (AR 335). Alone through this redeemer is the potential for new life "impregnated and evolved" making possible the development of "a *spiritual* Life" (AR 322). Conversely, for all those who do not have this seed of new life actualized through redemption, physical death is but the seed of "another death, not the mere negation of Life, but its positive Opposite," from which redemption is necessary (AR 322-3). At the same time, while there is nothing in human beings that allows them to extract themselves from Sin, Coleridge rejects extreme views of human depravity:

I utterly disclaim the idea, that any *human* intelligence, with whatever power it might manifest itself, is *alone* adequate to the office of restoring health to the Will: but at the same time I deem it impious and absurd to hold, that the Creator should have *given* us the faculty of Reason, or that the Redeemer would in so many varied forms of Argument and Persuasion have *applied* to it, if it had been either totally useless or impotent (AR 141).

While Coleridge forcefully defends the fact of the human inability, of its own power, to restore its will from Sin and Evil, his explanation for why this is the case (and how a fallen human will can remain a will) is either much subtler or he does not actually see the need to make the argument. He does state that a will can lose its freedom (or possibility for freedom) and yet still be a will, with the caveat that it would now be an "evil Will" (AR 286). Seeming to contradict this statement, though, is Coleridge's claim that "the Will is ultimately self-determined, or it is no longer a *Will* under the law of perfect Freedom, but a *Nature* under the mechanism of Cause and Effect" and furthermore that "if by an act, to which it has determined itself, it has subjected itself to the determination of Nature (in the language of St. Paul, to the

Law of the Flesh), it receives a nature into itself, and so far it becomes a Nature” (AR 285). The force of this claim could certainly indicate that a willful act of self-determination that rejects subordination to the “law of perfect Freedom” ceases to be a will. At the same time, Coleridge affirms not that this leads to an eradication of the will, but rather that “this is a corruption of the Will a corrupt Nature,” and it is in this that one can conceive of “a *Fall* of Man, inasmuch as his Will is the condition of his personality” (AR 285). Coleridge does not provide much further explanation, but it is possible that what he means here is something like his explanation in the *Opus Maximum* of the self that wills itself giving way not to utter dissolution but instead to the contradictory existence of the actual-possible. One could plausibly conclude then that the will, once it has self-constituted into something other than that for which it was created, has constituted itself as something that simply cannot reverse this direction; in the contradictory state of the actual-possible, this contradictory character would likely run through all individual acts of the will, meaning that any attempted decision to subordinate the will to universal Reason would in the same act be a decision that somehow undermines that attempt. However, these last few thoughts are highly speculative and it is just as likely, if not more so, that *how* it is possible for a human with an evil will to be simultaneously unable, of its own power, to be restored while also remaining *responsible*, is something that Coleridge believes must be left to mystery. “A life of Wickedness is a life of Lies; and an Evil Being or the Being of Evil, is the last and darkest mystery” (AR 248). And it is with this invocation of the ultimately mysterious nature of Sin that we can turn our attention to Coleridge’s conception of original sin.

Coleridge’s doctrinal commitments showed that he came to see original sin as a necessary and distinctive Christian doctrine. However, he also thought that any of the significant philosophies and religions of the world recognize with various degrees of clarity the same

phenomenon: “The doctrine (that is, the confession of a known fact) Christianity has only in common with every Religion, and with every Philosophy, in which the reality of a responsible Will and the *essential* difference between Good and Evil have been recognized” (AR 289). What is unique to Christianity, and what constitutes the doctrine as uniquely Christian, is that it recognizes not only the Sin, but also the “Remedy and (for all but the purposes of a merely speculative Curiosity) the Solution,” and this as an *actual* and not merely speculative solution (AR 289). So it would appear that Coleridge’s assertion in his confessions of faith that the doctrine of original sin was in some way unique to Christianity is not the recognition of the phenomenon, or even its severity, as much as the reciprocity between the problem and the solution. Hence, “the two great moments of the Christian Religion are, Original Sin and Redemption; *that* the Ground, *this* the Superstructure of our faith” (AR 305).

An exposition of original sin and attempt to place Coleridge’s conception within the larger context of the entire Christian tradition could rightfully fill volumes. For our present purposes, we need only consider three conceptions of original sin: that of Canons from the Synod of Dort (and Jeremy Taylor’s understanding of them), Jeremy Taylor’s rejection of this view, and the position put forward in Article 9 “Of Original or Birth Sin” from the Book of Common Prayer, since Coleridge believes the first two views defective interpretations of Article 9 and sought to offer his own position that represented a third, and correct, reading of the article. Showing that these are the three conceptions that he had in mind, Coleridge says that he provided an exhibition of original sin “according to the Scheme of the Westminster Divines and the Synod of Dorp<sup>433</sup>; then, according to the scheme of a contemporary Arminian Divine; and lastly, in

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<sup>433</sup> At least two occurrences in *Aids to Reflection* occur in which Coleridge replaces “Dort” with “Dorp,” and John Beer explained that this “may be a result of [Coleridge’s] reference to Dorpius” (AR CC 279n48). “Dorp” is a reference to Maarten Dorp, who was the addressee of Erasmus’s *Epistola ad Dorpem*, which was frequently included in editions of the *Morae encomium* (*In Praise of Folly*) (AR 244-5n32).

contrast with both schemes, I have placed what I firmly believe to be the *Scriptural* Sense of the Article, and vindicated its entire conformity with Reason and Experience” (AR 306-7).<sup>434</sup>

Coleridge begins his engagement with original sin in *Aids to Reflection* (his fullest treatment of the doctrine) with a quotation from Jeremy Taylor. This quote, modified only slightly to avoid Coleridge having to commit to whether Adam was originally mortal or immortal, was meant to present Taylor’s view of the effects of original sin. In sinning, Adam “brought evil into his *Supernatural* endowments, and lost the Sacrament and instrument of Immortality, the Tree of Life” (AR 265). The result of this loss was that “his sin left him to his *Nature*,” which meant that he became “sickly, his Sickness made him peevish: his Sin left him ignorant, his Ignorance made him foolish and unreasonable” (AR 265). Adam also lost access to these supernatural aids for all subsequent human beings, such that “by Nature, whoever was to be born at all, was to be born a child, and to do before he could understand, and to be bred under laws to which he was always bound, but which could not always be exacted, and he was to choose when he could not reason, and had passions most strong when he had his understanding most weak” (AR 265-6). Humanity became a kind of echo chamber for evil, such that all other people’s evils intensified and exacerbated each person’s individual evils: “Like ships in a storm, every one alone hath enough to do to outride it; but when they meet, besides the evils of the Storm, they find the intolerable calamity of their mutual concussion” (AR 266).

For Taylor, Adam’s first sin led to a state of universal human corruption, but in describing it this way it was the result of a loss of a supernatural gift and this state of corruption merely describes a state of nature unaided by grace. God allows this to happen, but Taylor does not believe that God actively distorts or disrupts human nature as a punishment. While humans

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<sup>434</sup> See the APPENDIX for the text of the relevant Canons and Article 9 from the Book of Common Prayer.

lost the supernatural grace that would have fortified them to follow God's commands easily and to receive the reward of glorification, Taylor does not, in this aphorism, clearly indicate whether this corruption rendered humans in principle incapable of their duty to God, or whether it simply made it much more difficult. In the work from Taylor that Coleridge sites, Taylor goes on one page later to clarify his position and affirm something like the latter:

Yet this I believe to be certain, that we by his fall received evil enough to undo us, and ruine us all; but yet the evil did so descend upon us, that we were left in powers and capacities to serve and glorifie God; Gods service was made much harder, but not impossible; mankind was made miserable, but not desperate, we contracted an actual mortality, but we were redeemable from the power of Death; sin was easie and ready at the door, but it was resistable; our *Will* was abused, but yet not destroyed; our Understanding was cosened, but yet still capable of the best instructions.<sup>435</sup>

Coleridge himself considered Taylor's position Pelagian, as indicated in a marginal note on Taylor's work (CM V 610). Taylor, however, thought that he was preserving a correct view of original sin. In answering whether there is original sin, Taylor affirms that "it is a fact acknowledged on all hands almost" and he "cannot but confess that *to be*, which I feel and groan under, and by which all the world is miserable" (AR 365). What Taylor is responding to is his understanding of the exposition of original sin by the Synod of Dort. Taylor saw Dort as teaching not only that human beings are "totally dead" in sin, but that humans are wholly disposed to evil and incapable of any good action; that the corruption of humanity flowed from an imputation, i.e., God's activity and not only passive allowance; and that the *guilt* of Adam's Sin is imparted to all subsequent human beings simply by nature of their being born.<sup>436</sup> Now, Taylor recognizes a distinction between certain Calvinists who proved "so fierce in their sentences of predestination and reprobation" that they saw humanity as "slaves, over whom he having absolute power, was very gracious that he was pleased to take some few, and save them

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<sup>435</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *Σύμβολον Θεολογικόν; or, a collection of polemicall discourses...* (London, 1674), 870.

<sup>436</sup> Taylor, *Σύμβολον Θεολογικόν*, 872.

absolutely; and to the other greater part he did no wrong, though he was pleased to damn them eternally, only because he pleased.”<sup>437</sup> This position he believes makes “God to be powerful, but his power not to be good; it makes him more cruel to men, than good men can be to Dogs and Sheep; it makes him give the final sentence of Hell without any pretence or colour of justice.”<sup>438</sup> Taylor does see those who follow the Synod of Dort as attempting to soften the train of this thought, and he does not believe that they actually want to affirm such extreme positions, but he believes they end up with the same scheme only at one degree more removed. In other words, rather than damning the greater part of humanity for no reason other than God’s glory (so Taylor believes), God damns the majority of humanity for their own sins, but now the “Sin” of every other human being is the sin of one person transferred to everyone else.<sup>439</sup>

Coleridge’s position ultimately differed from both Taylor’s and that of the Synod of Dort,<sup>440</sup> even though it maintained elements that resonated with both positions. Coleridge wanted to show that any careful analysis of the doctrine forces one to hold that human nature is corrupted, that humans become Sinful and utterly unable to extricate themselves from that Sinful nature from before (in an ontological sense) their existence in the world, and that they are rightfully responsible for that Sin. However, Coleridge also accepts that this cannot be something imputed and rather must result from each individual’s fundamental choice, such that even a full analysis of original sin cannot remove the fundamentally mysterious nature of Sin’s causal origin. He rejected Taylor’s position, but it does not seem that Coleridge merely puts Taylor’s position up in aphorism form to provide a foil for his own. He recognized that Taylor provided

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<sup>437</sup> Taylor, Σύμβολον Θεολογικόν, 871.

<sup>438</sup> Taylor, Σύμβολον Θεολογικόν, 871.

<sup>439</sup> Taylor, Σύμβολον Θεολογικόν, 872.

<sup>440</sup> It appears that Coleridge accepts Taylor’s interpretation of the Canons of Dort.

an account of the doctrine that accounts for fundamental flaws in the Calvinist (and one may say generally Augustinian) understanding of original and hereditary sin, corruption, and guilt. At the same time, Coleridge acknowledges that while Taylor's instinct that the Dortian explanation makes God unjust, his solution still yields the same view of God but now with the added deficit of requiring the acceptance of the Pelagian heresy.

Coleridge held that any Sin, for it to be properly considered Sin, must have "its ground or origin in the Agent, and not in the compulsion of Circumstances" (AR 266). For Sin to be Sin, it must be the result of a decision of the will, meaning that it has no antecedent determination or causal explanation other than that decision of the will. Coleridge acknowledges that there can be evil either inflicted or suffered because of external causal circumstances, but "such *evil* is not *sin*; and the person who suffers it, or who is the compelled instrument of its infliction on others, may feel *regret*, but cannot feel *remorse*" (AR 267). He arrives at this position by analyzing how responsibility is attributed to human actions. If a human being does what seems to be a great evil, but proves to be a maniac<sup>441</sup>, then the results can be considered "calamity, deformity, disease, or mischief," but the "Verdict follows of course — not guilty" (AR 271).

Two major points flow from this observation. First, Coleridge believes that the term "Original Sin" is "a pleonasm, the epithet not adding to the thought, but only enforcing it" (AR 271). Every sin, both in terms of the fundamental self-constitution of the individual in opposition to its created purpose, and then every choice, or act of the will, that results from this now evil will, is "original" in that it has its grounding source in the agent and cannot be attributed to anything prior to or outside of the causative power of the will. The other point, though, is that external circumstances cannot adequately explain Sin. Therefore, any account that places the

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<sup>441</sup> I.e., a person whose actions are not ultimately the result of choice determined by sound understanding.



ground of Sin in something imposed from without ultimately defeats itself. Coleridge affirms that Taylor rightfully opposed the idea that God would actively corrupt human nature as a punishment and then find this distorted will and subsequent offenses flowing from it deserving of guilt and punishment: “That Jeremy Taylor, therefore, should have striven fervently against the Article so interpreted and vindicated is (for me, at least,) a subject neither of Surprise or Complaint” (AR 276). However, Coleridge believes Taylor errs in locating the injustice at the level of God’s activity instead of mere external determination. Taylor still advances a scheme in which God damns people for something that should not be considered sin and attributes guilt where guilt should not justly be attributed. While Taylor claims that “perfect Obedience became incomparably more difficult, it was not, however, *impossible*,” at the same time that “of the countless missions of Adam’s Posterity, not a single Individual ever realized, or approached to the realization of this possibility” (AR 276). Thus, while Taylor’s opposition to a particular *interpretation* (on Coleridge’s view) of the Article on Original Sin is correct, his substitution only makes matters worse. Taylor effectively makes the universal corruption of humanity after Adam not Sin, but disease, and then proposes that God will damn humanity for acting out of infirmity rather than Sin. Taylor “imposes another scheme, to which the same objections apply with even increased force, a scheme which seems to differ from the former only by adding fraud and mockery to injustice” (AR 276).

Coleridge thus sees value both in the formula of the Synod of Dort (and what may fairly be called a relatively classical Augustinian position) as well as elements of Taylor’s critiques. Coleridge accepted from the former that Sin is something attributable to every individual in some sense “before” birth. He likewise believed in a corruption of the will, and, in a way of speaking, of human nature, because of this Sin – although he would say that taking on a nature *is* the

corruption.<sup>442</sup> At the same time, for this to be Sin and not some other evil, it must be chosen by an agent and cannot be imputed. This point leads Coleridge to the position of rejecting a sense of hereditary Sin such that Adam could be the responsible agent for the sins of all future humanity. The corruption of any individual human will after Adam, or whoever the first individual human being was,<sup>443</sup> can be spoken of as “a *Consequence* of Adam’s fall, even as [one’s] Birth of Adam’s existence; as a consequence, a link in the historic Chain of Instances, whereof Adam is the first” (AR 289). However, the above is a kind of second level causal explanation for any subsequent individual’s Sin on par with saying that a particular crime is the consequence of the criminal’s parents’ being the cause of his or her coming into existence. Coleridge cannot accept that the establishment of a Sinful will is “*on account of* Adam, or that this evil principle was, a priori, inserted or infused in my Will by the Will of another” (AR 289).

At this point, Coleridge has established that original sin as it relates to the individual describes that fundamental act of the “Will’s own self-determination” to be grounded in something other than subordination to the Will and Reason of God (AR 286). The result of this malformed, contradictory Will is the establishment of “some private Maxim or By-law in the Will contrary to the universal Law of right Reason in the Conscience” and this proves to be then the ground from which all (metaphysically) subsequent evil acts flow (AR 289). Coleridge can explain how this is prior to birth for each individual in the sense that the Will’s fundamental act of self-determination “stands in no relation whatever to Time, can neither be called *in time* nor

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<sup>442</sup> Coleridge is ambivalent about whether the emergence of space and time are themselves the result of the Fall. There are points in the *Opus Maximum* that would point in this direction, although he never actually affirms this positively, and this seems like the force of saying that humans are now subject to a nature, i.e., the mechanistic order of cause and effect that only takes place in time and space. His Platonism would likely be a motive for this sort of understanding, and would put his understanding of creation and Fall in a place like Origen’s.

<sup>443</sup> Coleridge’s discussion of the Hebrew sense of “Adam” meaning the human genus and not an individual leads to a sense that he accepted the story in Genesis not as history but as allegory. At the same time, he does believe in an actual, historical first individual human being.

*outside of time*; but that all relations of Time are alien and heterogeneous in this question, as the relations and attributes of Space (nor or south, round or square, thick or thin) are to our Affections and Moral Feelings” (AR 287). Thus one can explain “the impossibility of an Individual’s referring to any particular time at which it might be conceived to have commenced, or to any period of his existence at which it was not existing” (AR 287).

The above description seems to solve the problems that Coleridge establishes as part of the doctrine when it is conceived of historically. No longer is Adam’s first Sin, the guilt of this Sin, or the subsequent corruption of the individual will imputed to subsequent humans; original sin is for each of them the atemporal, self-determining decision of the Will to seek its ground in something other than God. Coleridge believed that this placed the individual in a position from which he or she cannot extricate him- or herself. The question that arises, though, is how this could also represent a universal human existential reality. How is it that all human beings do come to actually make the fundamental self-determination for evil? *That* original sin is a universal phenomenon Coleridge thinks is not only something that must be affirmed by orthodox Christian believers, but indeed something almost universally recognized and affirmed by lived experience: “But the actual existence of moral evil we are bound in conscience to admit; and that there is an Evil common to all is a Fact” (AR 288). Almost every religious or philosophical system recognizes original sin, even if it is not so named or is only there implicitly. This recognition stems from the near universal recognition of moral evil in the world, and for it to truly be moral evil, it must be “an Evil that has its origin in a Will”; hence, sin (AR 288). Coleridge further posits that anything common to all must have a common ground and this ground cannot be found in the Divine Will. Therefore, “it must be referred to the Will of Man” (AR 288). In the final analysis, this is the most that can be *explained* about original sin as the

ground of universal human original sin. One cannot explain the thing itself and can only explain what cannot be said of it; one must ultimately accept that original sin as this universal ground “is a *Mystery*, that is, a Fact, which we can see, but cannot explain; and the doctrine a truth which we apprehend, but can neither comprehend nor communicate” (AR 288).

Coleridge recognized that his readers would likely prove unsatisfied with the ultimate appeal to mystery in his explanation of original sin. However, one should remember that he did not posit that this universal ground is *unknowable*, only that it is incomprehensible and thus must be known through apprehension or spiritual “vision,” in common with all other metaphysical truths. Likewise, he does not deny that you can explain *that* there is original sin – only that you cannot explain the true *nature* of original sin. Nevertheless, in a move that has a certain affinity with Kierkegaard’s claim in *the Concept of Anxiety* that one should search for the ground of one’s own original sin instead of being concerned with its ground in others, Coleridge goes on in the paragraph following the description of mystery to assert that it is far more important to seek the removal of original sin than to seek to understand it.<sup>444</sup> Using a medical analogy, Coleridge says that if one found oneself afflicted with a terrible disease and a physician came with the capacity to cure it, but could not communicate anything about the disease which the patient could understand, this in no way negates the need for treatment. Putting the words for the proper disposition of the patient into the mouth of this physician, Coleridge says, “Ask me not, how such a Disease can be conceived possible! Enough for the present that you know it to be real: *and I am come to cure the Disease not to explain it*” (AR 288).<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> See pp 50-51 of Søren Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. and trans. by Reidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980). Coleridge’s account of original sin shares many similarities with Kierkegaard’s, not least of which is the rejection of Adam as the cause of any individual’s original sin and the first sin being original sin for every individual.

<sup>445</sup> In fact the cure itself leads to a greater understanding of the disease.

One cannot truly divorce Coleridge's understanding of the human predicament from his conception of the solution, which, as stated above, belongs exclusively to the Christian religion. In a certain important way, original sin as a doctrine is not itself peculiar to Christianity except as it is the "antecedent ground and occasion of Christianity" (AR 291). Christianity itself, "as the Edifice raised on this ground," is nothing more or less than "the great Constituent Article of the Faith in Christ, as the Remedy of the Disease — The Doctrine of Redemption" (AR 291). Coleridge even stated that "Christianity and REDEMPTION are equivalent terms" (AR 307).<sup>446</sup>

If one were to summarize Coleridge's view of redemption, it would be that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate second person of the Trinity who is at once wholly human and wholly divine, humans can be born again such that the power of the Holy Spirit can free them from the consequences of Sin; being so freed, they can grow in likeness to Christ such that they return to restored relationship with God through the subordination of the individual will to the Will of God. Ultimately, *how* this is accomplished is, like the universal ground of original sin, a transcendent mystery. In his own summary in *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge sees four facets or questions that must be answered in a proper discussion of redemption: "Who (or What) is the 1. Agens Causator (causative agent)? 2. Actus Causativus (Causative Act)? 3. Effectum Causatum (Effect that is Caused)? 4. Consequentia ab Effecto (Consequences from the Effect)?" (AR 332). In attending to these facets a fuller explanation of Coleridge's conception of Redemption (and its subjective effects) can be brought to light.

However, while Coleridge's synopsis places the question of *who* causes redemption first, it will

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<sup>446</sup> In light of Coleridge's somewhat more expansive definition of the doctrines peculiar to Christianity in his "Confessiones Fidei," which include belief in original sin, the Atonement and Incarnation, the special revelation of the Bible, and the work of the Holy Spirit, one can construe his much more limiting statement in *Aids to Reflection* in one of three ways: First, he could mean here by "Redemption" everything which undergirds and flows from the redemptive act; second, he could be speaking hyperbolically, or; third, he may have been inconsistent. Regardless, this means that Coleridge gave pride of place to redemption even among specifically Christian doctrines.

be helpful to look at the nature of the redemptive act and the effect caused before turning to the fuller description of who accomplished it, since what he believes was brought about informs Coleridge's own description of *why* the agent had to be who the agent was.<sup>447</sup>

Little can be said about the *Actus Causativus* (the Causative Act) beyond its being “a spiritual and transcendent Mystery, ‘that passeth all understanding’” (AR 332). *How* Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection made possible being born anew, restored relationship with God, and sanctification must, like all mysteries, be apprehended rather than comprehended. At the same time, Coleridge does think it possible to describe the effects that result from this mysterious cause. By talking about the effects of the redemptive act, Coleridge considers various “atonement theories.” He begins by saying that there are five different images used in New Testament to describe the effects of Christ's redemptive act: “1. Sin-offerings, sacrificial expiation. 2. Reconciliation, Atonement, Καταλλαγή. 3. Ransom from slavery, Redemption, the buying back again, or being bought back, from *re* and *emo*. 4. Satisfaction of a Creditor's claims by a payment of the debt” and finally, fifth, “a *re-generation*, a *birth*, a spiritual seed impregnated and evolved, the germinal principle of a higher and enduring Life” (AR 320-2).

Coleridge differentiates between two types of images related to redemption in the New Testament. The first, which comprise the first four categories above and are found largely in Paul's writings, are meant to be metaphors that should not be taken as literal descriptions of the actual effects of the redemptive act (AR 320). The fifth image, which comes from John's Gospel “enunciates the fact itself, to the full extent in which it is enunciable for the human mind, simply

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<sup>447</sup> Still, to avoid talking about the redemptive act and its consequences in the abstract, it is helpful to know that Coleridge does speak of these things as having been done by Jesus Christ, and so it may be of use to provide the synopsis of the *Agens Causator*: “The Agent and Personal Cause of Redemption of Mankind is — the co-eternal Word and only begotten Son of the Living God, incarnate, tempted, agonizing (*Agonistes αγωνιζόμενος*), crucified, submitting to Death, resurgent, communicant of his Spirit, ascendent, and obtaining for his Church the Descent, and Communion of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter” (AR 332).

and *without any metaphor*” (AR 322). How Coleridge understands talk of a spiritual birth to be literal language will be discussed below. For most of these metaphorical images, Coleridge does not explain at length why they should be considered metaphors, but he does describe why metaphors would be used. Paul sought to explain redemption by means of “whatever was eminently dear and precious to erring and afflicted Mortals” to “seek from similitude of *effect* to describe the superlative boon by successively transferring to it, as by a superior claim, the name of each several Act and Ordinance” (AR 324). In other words, Paul explained that redemption was the sort of act that should elicit the “feelings of joy, confidence, and gratitude,” just like the images he employs would do in human interactions, but to a much greater degree.

Coleridge does spend considerable time describing the error in understanding the Redemptive Act as an actual payment of an infinite debt. He does not state explicitly why he chooses this iteration of the doctrine to analyze, although he does acknowledge that some divines see “that our Lord’s Words, recorded by John, and which in all places repeat and assert the same Analogy, are to be regarded as metaphorical, and that it is the varied expressions of St. Paul that are to be literally interpreted” (AR 326). One may infer that he chooses the metaphor for debt because it would have been the one he had encountered most in his readings of the Reformers, and thus the one most likely to be held by “orthodox” believers.<sup>448</sup>

Coleridge lays out his understanding of substitutionary atonement in this way:

Sin is, or involves an infinite Debt, (in the proper and law-court sense of the word, debt)—a debt owing by us to the vindictive Justice of God the Father, which can only be liquidated by the everlasting misery of Adam and all his posterity, or by a sum of suffering equal to this. Likewise, that God the Father by his absolute decree, or (as some Divines teach) through the necessity of his unchangeable Justice, had determined to exact the full sum; which must, therefore, be paid either by ourselves or by some other in our name and behalf. But besides the Debt which all Mankind contracted in and through Adam, as a Homo Publicus, even as a Nation is bound by the Acts of its Head or its Plenipotentiary, every man (say these Divines) is an insolent Debtor on his own score. In this fearful predicament the Son of God took

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<sup>448</sup> He intended to pass completely over the Alogi, i.e., those who denied the divinity of Christ, who “find nothing but metaphors in either Apostle,” which would indicate that he saw no merit in considering what amounts to an exclusively moral exemplar view of atonement as properly a theory of the atonement at all.

compassion on Mankind, and resolved to pay the debt for us, and to satisfy the divine Justice by a perfect equivalent. Accordingly, by a strange yet strict *consequence*, it has been holden by more than one of the Divines, that the agonies suffered by Christ were equal in amount to the sum total of the torments of all mankind here and hereafter, or to the infinite debt, which in an endless secessions of instalments we should have been paying to the divine Justice, had it not been paid in full by the Son of God incarnate! (AR 326-7)

One cannot take this view of redemption literally without also destroying a proper sense either of human beings as moral agents or of God as being properly just. The issue is that justice must be thought of as a moral attribute and as a moral attribute requires the “sacred distinction between Thing and Person” because “on this distinction all Law human and divine is grounded” (AR 327). Furthermore, if any meaning is to be given to the term “justice” when it is applied to God, it must retain the same meaning as it does for any other agent, with the exception that for God it is “as unmixed and perfect” (AR 328).

Because of this distinction between things and persons that is foundational for true morality, one can work from analogies drawn from our everyday life. Thus, it is possible to say that if a person were to owe someone else a certain sum of money (Coleridge uses the example of £1000), and another person were to pay off this sum, then it would be fully appropriate to say that full and perfect satisfaction had been made. This perfect satisfaction is possible because it requires only the substitution of things, which, since they are things, can function interchangeably (AR 328). However, using the analogy of a son who had grossly mistreated and acted with the highest ingratitude to “a most worthy and affectionate mother,” Coleridge believes it would be absurd to believe that, if someone other than the son were to step in and provide all the love and perform all the duties that were owed to this mother, this activity would somehow entitle the son thereby “to her Esteem, Approbation, and Blessing” (AR 329). The point here is that people, and the acts that flow thereby from their wills, are not interchangeable. What caused the broken or damaged relationship was not *that* evil acts had been done or certain duties neglected in the abstract, but that they had been done and neglected *by a particular person*.



This is not to say that this third person could do nothing to rectify the relationship between the mother and the son. Indeed, possibly by example, “by persuasion or by additional and more mysterious influences, or by an inward co-agency, compatible with the existence of a personal will,” the son could be led to repent and then become a “grateful and dutiful child” (AR 329). In this case, “doubtless the mother would be wholly satisfied,” although at this point “the case is no longer a question of *Things*, or a matter of a *Debt* payable by another” (AR 329).

One should note that while he saw these first four images as metaphors, Coleridge did not think they did not need to be taken seriously. While they cannot be taken as “the very nature of Redemption and its occasion,” these figures of speech are nevertheless provided “for the purpose of illustrating the nature and extent of the consequences and effects of the redemptive Act, and to excite in the receivers a due sense of the magnitude and manifold operation of the Boon, and of the Love and gratitude due to the Redeemer” (AR 327). They have a certain didactic function, but they above all seem to have a pastoral purpose insofar as they enable the hearer to have his or her affections properly disposed toward Christ.

If the Pauline imagery for the Redemptive act and consequences was meant to be taken metaphorically, the Johannine image of being born again in the Spirit must be taken analogically but literally. “Birth” functions as a metaphor if the only kind of birth that there is, is that of how we come to life and existence “in relation to our natural life and to the Organized Body, by which we belong to the present World” (AR 336). However, Coleridge asserts that the proper understanding of birth is that of entering into any state of life. The reason he holds this has to do with the way in which Jesus uses the term “birth” in John’s Gospel. Coleridge operates on the principle that “where two subjects, that stand to each other in the relation of *antithesis* (or contradistinction) are connected by a middle term common to both, the sense of this middle term

is indifferently determinable by *either*” (AR 335). In the case of Jesus’s words, “the two opposites *here* are Flesh and Spirit, *this* in relation to *Christ*, *that* in relation to the *World*, and these two Opposites are connected by the middle term, *Birth*” (AR 336). Because of “birth” as the middle term, its meaning must be “the same *essentially* (in *kind* though not dignity and value)” (AR 336). Thus, both bodily and spiritual birth are of the same kind, representing the emergence of a life, with the first representing the emergence of life in this world and in this corruptible body, and the second describing the emergence of a spiritual life, “that is, a Life, the actuality of which is not dependent on the material body, or limited by the circumstances and processes indispensable to its organization and subsistence” (AR 322).

Coleridge repeatedly affirmed that the agent of Redemption is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity. He seems to have held this as a matter best established and affirmed by special revelation. The question can still be put forward as to *why* it would be that the agent of redemption would be the incarnate second person of the Trinity (that this incarnate Logos would be Jesus of Nazareth is something that can only be known *a posteriori*). On the one hand, Coleridge believed that the revelation of the agent of our redemption as both divine and human had been “*assured to us by Revelation*” (AR 335).

At the same time, Coleridge believed that the original purpose of humanity and the results of the fall made it necessary that the Agent of Redemption be the Divine-Human. Coleridge held that the Fall was not a corruption *of* human nature, but a fall *into* a nature. However, this was what may be called a *taking on* of nature rather than a *becoming* nature, because had humanity *become* nature, it would mean becoming “an Animal wholly” (CN V 5813). That humanity did not completely lose its distinguishing humanity was only through Divine mercy. However, God’s “preventing the submersion of Man in the Nature” was not the

same as the extraction and final detachment of humanity from this nature (CN V 5814). It is unclear whether Coleridge thought that this detachment yielded a humanity “restored to [its] first ground,” or if this detachment is a necessary condition in a larger act of re-formation (CN V 5813).<sup>449</sup> In either case, the capacity for this detachment implies the incarnation. The ultimate end of humanity, both in the sense of the result of redemption and of the purpose for which humanity was created, is “the union of humanity with it’s [sic] Divine Ground” (CN V 5814). Thus, it was necessary for the Son of God to take “Humanity into his Divinity, as the Mordaunt, or common medium, without which no affinity is possible” and likewise to humble himself “to the same Ground, and to have the Nature which Mankind had” (CN V 5816).<sup>450</sup> This taking on of the nature into which humanity had fallen was for the purpose of destroying its hold on the *truly* or *properly* human in order to make a separation possible. Thus, the Divine Man took on a truly human nature insofar as this nature represents “consequences, penalties and incitements of *Sin*, the base of Sin,” but he did so while remaining sinless (CN V 6527).<sup>451</sup> The union of the sinless Will with human nature occurred in such a way that it was “combined without ~~pas~~ spiritually appropriating it” and was thus able to neutralize any necessary connection between humanity and sinful nature (CN V 6527).

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<sup>449</sup> Given that the redemptive act is ultimately a mystery, it may not be possible to provide a definitive answer to this question.

<sup>450</sup> One of the interesting uncertainties that arises for later consideration is whether Coleridge thought that humanity would always have needed a mediator for union with God, and thus whether the incarnation would have occurred in some form even if there had not been a fall. In at least one place Coleridge answers affirmatively: In a note on a passage in Jeremy Taylor’s work, Coleridge asserted that “this is likewise my belief: and that man must have had a Christ, even if Adam had continued in Paradise” (CM V 603).

<sup>451</sup> Because the Divine Man takes on the nature into which humans fell, but did so without having sinned, Coleridge states that Jesus had a “likeness of *sinful* flesh,” which he contradistinguished from the Docetist claim that Christ had only the “ὁμοιωμᾶ σαρκος” (likeness of flesh) (CN 6527). In other words, Christ truly took on human flesh (a human, material body) that bore all the results of Sin, but not having its origin *in* Sin.

Significantly, Coleridge locates this nature into which humans has fallen *as* the material (or perhaps better) phenomenal world which we now inhabit. For instance, in a note on one of Edward Irving’s Sermons, Coleridge stated that “time and τὰ μὴ θεός (things that are not God) were themselves the necessary result of the Fall” (CM III 22). As another example, Coleridge says in a letter to Dr. Green in 1820 that “there are phaenomena, which are phaenomena relatively to our present 5 senses — & these Christ forbids us to understand as his meaning, & collectively they are entitled the Flesh that perishes” (CL V 49). Nevertheless, Coleridge does not appear to be intentionally promoting any metaphysical dualism whereby the incorporeal is good and the corporeal is evil. One finds instead an attempt at a unitive view of reality whereby evil resides in corporeality only insofar as it opposes the spiritual. Indeed, attaining to our ultimate end of union with God cannot mean a “mystic annihilation of individuality, no breaking of the Bottle and blending it’s contained water with the Ocean in which it had been floating” because this means a “Spinozistic Deity” (CN V 5748). This ultimate state represents “an *intension*, a perfecting of our Personality,” and “where Persons are, and Community, and ever intercirculating Love, there must *Bodies* be — spiritual or as St. Paul says Celestial Bodies indeed, but yet Bodies” (CN V 5748). Hence it is *nature* – not body – that opposes spirit.<sup>452</sup>

Having described the *act* of Redemption as ultimately a mystery, the effect of this act as a second, spiritual birth, and the causative agent as Jesus Christ, the incarnate second Person of the Trinity, it is possible to move on to the *Consequentia ab Effecto* (the consequences from the Effect). These are “Sanctification from Sin, and Liberation from the inherent and penal

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<sup>452</sup> Coleridge does not even necessarily place the realm of the phenomenal in opposition to spirit. In the same letter to Dr. Green in which he states that Christ urges us to move beyond the *immediate phenomena*, Coleridge asks “But does it follow, that there are no other Phaenomena? or that these other media of manifestation might not stand to a spiritual world & to our enduring Life in the same relation as our visible Mass of Body stands to the World of the Senses & to the sensations correspondent to, & excited by, the stimulants of that World?” (CL V 49)

consequences of Sin in the World to Come, with all the means and processes of Sanctification by the Word and the Spirit” (AR 332). In describing sanctification, one should distinguish *what* happens in the being of those being sanctified and then *how* this transformation affects the subjective states and acts of the transformed person (this second element also proves a substantial part of sanctification epistemically conceived, i.e., how the individual may know that this transformation is occurring). It may be helpful to begin with a comment Coleridge made on Luther’s *Table Talk*: “But surely Justification, and Sanctification are one Act of God—& only different perspectives of Redemption by, in, thro’, and *for* Christ. They are one and the same Plant, Justification the Root, Sanctification the Flower—and (may I not venture to add?) Transubstantiation into Christ the celestial Fruit!” (CM III 748). The final goal of regenerate humanity is to be fully “transubstantiated” into Christ.

Coleridge uses different (but generally biblical) images to describe this process of being conformed to Christ. In some places, the regenerate person is “each twig or fibre that grows out of the Root” (CN V 6011). While images of being brought into or grafted onto Christ abound, there is also imagery of Christ present *within* the soul. In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge spoke about Life being born and growing *in* the Soul of the believer, and not only does Christ bring resurrection and new life, he *is* “THE WAY, the Life, the RESURRECTION” (CN V 5814). In 1830 Coleridge writes explicitly of “the indwelling of Christ in the Soul” (CN V 6524). These spatial images, of being grafted *onto*, brought *into*, or of growth *within* the regenerate all attempt to convey that transformation into Christ, being made both righteous and holy, requires intimate union with Christ. Hence Coleridge’s use of the term “transubstantiation”: the regenerate do not only become *like* Christ – their essence actually becomes the being of Christ. This insight appears to lie at the core of a quote taken from Leighton, in which the Bishop says that “they [the

regenerate] shall rise by the communication and virtue of his Rising: not simply by his *power* — for so the wicked likewise to grief shall be raised — but *they by his life as their life*” (CN V 5825). Christ is not only the mediator between God and humanity, but is “himself the Medium between the Creature and Himself” (CN V 5825). This “transfiguration” into Christ makes possible a believer’s participation in resurrected life where the consequences of Sin in the body are removed as well as of union with the Will of God through the transformation of our corrupt will into the Will of the Divine Humanity.<sup>453</sup>

The power of the Holy Spirit provides the means for the individual’s assimilation to Christ and Christ’s presence to the soul. Coleridge alludes to this in saying that “in regenerate souls [the Spirit] may act *in* the will; that uniting and becoming one with our will and spirit, it may ‘make intercession for us,’ nay, in this intimate union taking upon itself the form of our infirmities, may intercede for us” (AR 78). In a notebook entry, Coleridge makes this even more explicit, saying that the Spirit is “the ingenerated Christ, the new Nature,” which could “alone cast off, & or resist Sin” (CN V 6012).

Faith describes in some way the union of the individual will with Reason considered under the form of the intellect *in* this world. Thus, Coleridge could describe “the necessity of

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<sup>453</sup> In this sense of union, though, Coleridge still wants the regenerate individual to remain distinct. In his repeated rejection of pantheism and the description of the continuation of individual consciousness in the resurrected life, Coleridge made plain that he would not want an *absolute* and *complete* subsuming of the individual into Christ. Such seems to be the other side of the importance of the term “transubstantiation.” While becoming one in essence with Christ, the individual still retains one’s outward “accidents.” This need for an assimilation of the soul to Christ while retaining individuality reasserts itself in other places. In his parable about the proper understanding of redemption, Coleridge says that what is needed for restored relationship between the mother and son is for the son to “in his own person become a grateful and dutiful child” through “gradually assimilating his mind to the mind of his benefactor” (AR 329). That there is both an assimilation of the mind to that of the benefactor *and* the retention of the son’s own personhood indicates this need for an individual’s mind to become the mind of Christ while still being one’s own. Coleridge does not dwell on *how* this is possible, but it may relate to the nature of the Divine Human. Because it is the second person of the Trinity, the Divine Idea that is the “pleromena” of all “distinctities,” that becomes human, the divine humanity in Christ may already contains within itself the perfected union of each individual *qua* individual and God. Thus, the “mind of Christ” that the individual is transfigured into is a mind that includes the distinction between that person and Christ in the unity between them.

*Faith* in each individual in order to his appropriation of this redemption” (OM 53). Because “Faith must be a *Life* originating in the Logos” and the indwelling of Christ in the soul that is the spiritual birth communicates this life to fallen humanity, Coleridge must believe that faith is not something temporally prior to redemption, but rather the subjective state of the redeemed (SW&F 844). Just as faith is the union of will and Reason under the form of the intellect, so if there is this union, there is also Love, since Love is this union as it relates to the will. In this way, Coleridge could affirm that “from God’s Love through his Son, crucified for us from the beginning of the world, Religion begins: and in Love towards God and the creatures of God it hath its end and completion” (LS 92). Furthermore, union with the divine will not only produces a reciprocal *fullness* of love returned to God, but also an *overflowing* of Love toward creation. Thus, love of God gives rise to proper love of neighbor (LS 91).<sup>454</sup>

Prior to death and the resurrection necessary for the full removal of this body which is the result of our sinful fall into a nature, humanity remains confined to the knowledge that comes through the understanding and has no capacity for making spiritual realities objects of our own “direct and immediate Consciousness,” specifically “all Truths, and all modes of Being that can neither be counted, colored, or delineated” – including the workings of the Spirit on and in us (AR 79). Instead, so long as we remain in a state of hope for a final and complete regeneration, the activity of the Spirit must be inferred “*from* its workings; it cannot be perceived *in* them” (AR 79). Whether something actually *is* an effect or working of the Spirit can be “assuredly known,” but only insofar as these effects are subjected to reflection under the guidance of the Scriptures, which “furnish the clear and unfailing Rules for directing the inquiry, and for drawing

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<sup>454</sup> In good Augustinian fashion, the proper love of neighbor and creation must always flow from and be subordinate to the love of God, otherwise it represents an opposition between the individual and divine will and cannot be real love (or at least is a lesser and disordered love) (SW&F 844).

the conclusion” (AR 79). Accountability to the rule of Scripture prevents a person from succumbing to the “danger of Fanaticism or Enthusiasm” (AR 78).

As the spiritual testament of the union of the individual will with Reason, or the “peace that passeth all understanding,” the presence of this testament through Conscience, or the presence of its negative condemning function, serves to provide assurance of whether we are at peace with God. However, as a *spiritual* testimony, there would be need of reflecting on some effects for us to have an inference of this spiritual state. Hence, Coleridge says that “our own inward Peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind,” when arrived at in “a soul watchful, and under the discipline of the Gospel” may be considered “the medium or organ through which the assurance of his Peace with God is conveyed” (AR 88).

Love of God, properly speaking, does not describe a “feeling” or “affection,” but rather a spiritual state of union between the individual and Divine Will. Thus, it cannot, in this current state, be an immediate object of consciousness. Works become important now because they can serve as a kind of “effect” from which one can infer the love of God and receive “evidence of faith.” While humans are called to follow God’s moral commands, obedience is not in and of itself what makes acts good. Instead, following the moral law when these acts flow from proper affections makes the works good. If one follows the moral commands *qua* imposed law, i.e., if one follows them only out of self-interested hope for rewards and fear of punishments and a belief in the capacity of the law-giver to enforce these rewards and punishments, then these are dead works because rewards and punishments are only “lifeless and unsubstantial Shapes of the actual Forms” of motivations for good works (CM III 741). On the other hand, if the affections are first formed by an initiating act of God’s love, *viz.*, redemption, then the believer will experience affections of “Faith, Gratitude, Love, and affectionate Contemplation of the



exceeding Goodness and loveliness of the Saviour, Redeemer, and Benefactor.” From these affections “will flow the deeds, or rather the Affections overflow in the Deeds” (CM III 741). There is a reciprocity between affections and deeds as they provide evidence for one’s love of God that yields love of neighbor. True acceptance of redemption should yield proper feelings of joy and gratitude, but these are in and of themselves not enough to prove that one has the love of God. Because love of God is not only a fullness but an overflowing, if joy and gratitude do not overflow into a desire to follow the moral law out of a love both of God *and* the well-being of God’s creation, it is unlikely that these feelings are truly effects of a love of God. At the same time, works can only be good when they flow from the proper posture of *response* to God’s redemptive act, and thus serve as effects of salvation rather than conditions for it.

One last consequence of Christ’s redemptive act is the removal of guilt incurred by human sin. This effect is one that could be easily overlooked because Coleridge does not emphasize this element in his work nearly as much as the other consequences of redemption, but it seems unavoidable that Coleridge did believe that humans had incurred guilt through sin that needed removal. First, Coleridge believed in the suffering of Hell as not merely a punishment that was the natural consequence of a human action. He goes further in describing punishment for evil as not only a corrective, but as flowing from the incompatibility of evil and holiness:

That all punishments work for the good of the whole, and that the good of the whole is included in God’s design, I admit: but that this is the sole cause, and the sole justification of divine punishment, I cannot, I dare not, concede; —because I should thus deny the essential evil of guilt, and its inherent incompatibility with the presence of a Being of infinite holiness. Now, exclusion from God implies the sum and utmost of punishment; and this would follow from the very essence of guilt and holiness, independently of example, consequence, or circumstance (CM II 800).

Furthermore, Coleridge affirmed in *Aids to Reflection* in summarizing his view of Redemption that one of its consequences was the removal of the penal consequences of Sin, which would seem to indicate a removal of the guilt of Sin. That Coleridge saw the removal of guilt, at least in

a metaphysical and objective sense of guilt, appears obvious from his claims that guilt leads to the need for positive punishment, and in the redeemed there is no longer such a punishment. That he did not go into greater detail about *how* this happened is likely because this falls under the same mystery of how the sinless will of the divine humanity could assume the consequences of a sinful nature and then communicate restored humanity to other individuals.

Coleridge also believed it possible, and in many cases necessary, to admit that sanctification after being “born anew” was a matter of continual growth in holiness. To begin with, Coleridge held that full sanctification and the complete removal of Sin in this life was an impossibility. It is death and resurrection into a new and uncorrupt (and incorruptible) body by which God’s mercy “precipitates the Alien & Adverse” so that we can “hope to be fit for heaven” (CN V 6459). Thus, the death that Christ conquered was not the “dissolution of our earthly tabernacle which we call death,” but instead the complete “assimilation to the Principle of Evil” which is the continuation of consciousness in the separation from God that is Hell (AR 322). For the Christian, death as the dissolution of this body is not an evil but an act of grace since it becomes the occasion for the growth to maturity of the “spiritual seed impregnated and evolved, the germinal principle of a higher and enduring life, of a *spiritual* Life” (AR 322).

Furthermore, in several places, Coleridge describes the life of faith as one of growth and progression. First, in his notebook entry summarizing the process of redemption Coleridge asserted that there is a process of “gradual extraction” before a “final detachment from Nature” (CN V 5814). In the *Opus Maximum* he asserted that there are fruits of faith which are the “tests and criterion of [faith’s] existence, and which are at the same time a necessary part of the appointed means of its growth and progress” (OM 53). In critiquing Wesley’s (early)<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Coleridge (and Southey) was using one of Wesley’s early, more radical, definitions of Christian Perfection, since Southey here supplied a definition of Christian Perfection as the “free, full, and present salvation from all the guilt,

understanding of Christian Perfection, he held that the concept of “perfection” in the gospel of Matthew would be better conceived of as “*Full Growth, Adult*” which nevertheless does not imply a “point, at which you can arrive in this life, in which the Command — ‘Soar upwards still’ ceases in validity or occasion” (CM V 169-70).

Having described the various effects of redemption, one may ask *how* a person may receive this spiritual birth. This point allows for a consideration of Coleridge’s thoughts on election. Coleridge begins his discussion in *Aids to Reflection* on the question of divine election by saying that it should prove innocuous and therefore a possibility for true Christian belief, even if some have misused the doctrine to support fanaticism. Properly understood, election is one link on a three-linked chain where “Two Links of the Chain (viz. Election and Salvation) are up in heaven in God’s own hand; but this middle one (i.e. Effectual Calling) is let down to earth into the hearts of his children” (AR 71). Because these links are connected inseparably, clarity about effectual calling (the only one of the three that is available to human beings) provides the means by which an individual can have assurance about his or her election and salvation. However, the way that one becomes clear of an effectual calling is not otherwise than by seeking the signs of election in growing in love (and the acts that flow from love) as a result of having been loved first (AR 72). In pointing out that this doctrine does not lead to the “perversions of the Fanatic,” Coleridge is referring to the linking of the doctrine of election with pretensions to immediate Spiritual revelations of this election that can lead to antinomianism (AR 72). That Coleridge saw this danger in the linking of these things is reinforced by his statement in his notes on Southey’s *Life of Wesley* that Whitefield’s acceptance of the doctrine of election became dangerous in

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all the power, and all the in-being of sin.” Wesley later tempered this view, although Coleridge likely still would not have accepted Wesley’s belief that all inner propensity toward sin could be rooted out while we are in this life, since Coleridge in many ways located the propensity toward individual sins in this corporeal body.

Methodism “only by being mixed with the new ingredient, the juice of the Plant ex Horto Wesleyano [from the Wesleyan garden], videlicet, the doctrine of individual assurance, and a *sensation* of Election” (CM V 155). By combining these, the believer no longer must seek signs of election in “the moral Result” that is the only “sure pledge and token” of the Spirit’s work and presence (AR 73). However, if effectual calling can only be discerned through inference from good works flowing from gratitude for what God has done in redemption, then the doctrine of election not only need not but *should not* lead to antinomianism.

Coleridge further believes not only that the doctrine of election is acceptable for Christians, but that he himself holds it and trusts that most other Christians who reflect on their experience of salvation would come to accept it as well. Importantly, though, he takes a very circumscribed approach to the doctrine of election. First, he does not believe that it should be arrived at through mere speculative theology, but should come about from the reflection by the individual believer that the “first movements and preparations” of the will and understanding on which his or her hope is founded should not be discovered in one’s “own comparative excellence” (AR 171). However, if it is not possible to ground this initial movement of the will and understanding in oneself, then “to whom shall [the believer] assign it, if not to that Being in whom the Promise originate, and on whom its Fulfillment depends” (AR 171). Thus, Coleridge believes the Doctrine of Election will be “in itself a necessary inference from an undeniable fact – necessary at least for all who hold that the best of men are what they are through the grace of God” (AR 173). At the same time, while Coleridge held this doctrine, understood with due circumscription, to be “rational, safe, and of essential importance,” there are “many reasons resulting from the peculiar circumstances...why a discreet Minister of the Gospel should avoid

the frequent use of the *term*, and express the *meaning* in other words perfect equivalent and equally scriptural: lest in *saying* truth he might convey error” (AR 173-4).

Importantly, Coleridge believed that the doctrine of election should be understood in “its relation to Man” and that one should avoid “metaphysical views of Election, relatively to God” (AR 166). Election, as it corresponds to God’s universal decrees, would be an Idea and thus a mystery. Once it is confined to its relation to humanity, “we are determined by a *practical* interest exclusively” and we “may not, like theoretical or speculative Positions, be pressed onward into all their possible *logical* consequences” (AR 166-7). Thus, how one judges the doctrine must be confined to how it conforms to the dictates of practical reason and morality. After one has established that the doctrine does not necessarily contradict practical reason, and then pressing onward to determine that it is necessary, it is still possible to gain greater clarity according to the dictates of moral reasoning. Hence, however one holds the doctrine of Election, one should rule out “the doctrine of modern Calvinism as laid down by Jonathan Edwards and the late Dr. Williams, which represents a Will absolutely passive, clay in the hands of a Potter,” because it “destroys all Will, takes away its essence and definition” (AR 158). This is because by taking away any sense of active will, one destroys the responsible will and thus the basis of morality. Therefore, in holding the doctrine of election, one cannot allow it to turn into a doctrine of divine determinism; the believer must maintain that salvation is effected “not *by* Will of man alone; but neither *without* the Will” (AR 158).

With this sketch of Coleridge’s theological thought, it is possible to show that Coleridge did provide a more thoroughly *systematic* and *explicit* philosophical superstructure to the doctrinal emphases explained in his “Confessiones Fidei.”<sup>456</sup> This philosophical scaffolding for

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<sup>456</sup> I say explicit and systematic because, as scholars such as Bebbington and Hempton have pointed out, the Evangelical Revival in Britain, especially as it was understood and developed theologically by the intellectual

his doctrinal convictions does not, however, move Coleridge farther away from the Anglican Evangelicals, even if it does reinforce one's awareness of his belief that their exposition was incomplete. If anything, Coleridge's larger theo-philosophical project strikes one as that more thorough-going doctrinal exposition of the Evangelical position that he wished he had received from Thomas Methuen. Coleridge sought to provide an intellectual defense of a Christianity that emphasized precisely those points that the Evangelicals emphasized, and he did so while often preserving or expanding upon what could be a more or less realized "method" that directed Anglican Evangelical thinking.

There are several elements of Coleridge's thought that demonstrate a close affinity with that of the broader evangelical movement. To begin with, Coleridge held to a view that emphasized proper relationship with God rather than or going beyond intellectual assent to certain propositions. Even though Coleridge does not use the terminology of dead and lively or true faith, he does say that while "all effective Faith presupposes Knowledge and individual Conviction," it must rise beyond "mere acquiescence in Truth, uncomprehended and unfathomed" to include being "rooted and grounded in love" (LS 48). Furthermore, in *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, Coleridge makes explicit that faith and belief must be distinguished, and that faith goes well beyond mere lack of doubt in certain propositional truths. He can say that although he is free of doubt about certain core claims of Christianity, Coleridge wishes that his "*Faith*, that faith which works on the whole man, confirming and conforming, were in proportion to [his] *Belief*, to the full acquiescence of [his] ~~Mind~~ Intellect and the deep Consent of [his] Conscience" (SW&F 1119-20).

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leaders of the movement, remained indebted to and made use of philosophical categories from the Enlightenment. What distinguishes this from Coleridge's thought was that this appropriation was much more *ad hoc* and never achieved the same degree of integration that Coleridge offered.

Similarly, Coleridge understands “conscience” as the “spiritual testimony” or at times “spiritual sensation” that, as the “peace that passeth all understanding,” looks very much like the doctrine of assurance that proved a distinguishing mark of so much general evangelical thought. As Bebbington points out, one of the shifts that occurred from earlier Puritan thinking to the later Evangelicals was a transition from a sense that “a persistent phase of gloom was a sign of true religion” where “assurance was by no means the norm” to the expectation that “assurance is the normal possession of the believer.”<sup>457</sup> For Coleridge, “the proper and natural Effect, and in the absence of all disturbing or intercepting forces, the certain and sensible accompaniment of Peace (or Reconcilement) with God, is our own inward Peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind” (AR 88). Moreover, he further affirms that “a holy heart that gladly entertains grace, shall find that it and peace cannot dwell asunder; while an ungodly man may sleep to death in the lethargy of carnal presumption and impenitency; but a true lively, solid peace he cannot have” (AR 89).

It is true that Coleridge did not present nearly the same sense of the *intensity* of assurance as some others in the evangelical movement, such as Whitefield, who held that this assurance would be “joy unspeakable – even joy that was full of and big with glory.”<sup>458</sup> At the same time, it was not unusual for other evangelicals to speak of this assurance in terms of being at peace. John Wesley not only spoke of the assurance of salvation as “a steady peace,” but also went to far as to use the same language as Coleridge in describing this “Spirit of Adoption” as “that ‘peace which passes all understanding.’”<sup>459</sup> Furthermore, evangelicals often believed that this assurance, or at least the perception of assurance, could decrease in intensity for periods of time. This view

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<sup>457</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 45.

<sup>458</sup> Whitefield, quoted in Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 46.

<sup>459</sup> Wesley, “Witness of Spirit, Discourse II,” V.4, in *Works*, 1.

was particularly common among Anglican Evangelicals. For instance, Bean stated that “the comforts of Religion may, for wise reasons, be suspended by him who gave them, or that the great enemy of mankind may sometimes be permitted to harrass [sic] a pious mind.”<sup>460</sup> Henry Venn understood that while the evidence of faith is permanent, the “sensible comforts of a Christian, it is true, are in their nature fluctuating.”<sup>461</sup> Even Wesley would admit that “joy in the Holy Ghost may be withdrawn during the hour of trial, yea the soul may be ‘exceeding sorrowful’ [cf. Mt. 26:38].”<sup>462</sup> In like manner, Coleridge affirms (*via* a quotation from Leighton) that “this Peace which we have with God in Christ, is inviolable; but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God’s countenance, on which its tranquility and joy depend” (AR 89). However, “when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with new consolation” (AR 89) This sentiment echoes Wesley’s understanding that when the “hour of darkness” is over, joy and peace are “generally restored with increase, till we rejoice ‘with joy unspeakable and full of glory’ [cf. I Pet. I:8].”<sup>463</sup>

One could conceivably challenge this point since Wesley’s conception of assurance required the acceptance of *direct* testimony of the Spirit to an individual believer’s consciousness, a point that Coleridge explicitly rejected. However, this only serves to underscore Coleridge’s location within the realm of Anglican Evangelicalism. Bebbington points out that

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<sup>460</sup> James Bean, *Zeal without Innovation; or, the present State of Religion and morals considered...* (London: F.C.&J. Rivington, 1808), 158.

<sup>461</sup> Henry Venn, *The Complete Duty of Man, Or, A System of Doctrinal & Practical Christianity...* (London, 1763), 94.

<sup>462</sup> Wesley, “Witness of the Spirit, II,” V.3, in *Works*, 1.

<sup>463</sup> Wesley, “Witness of the Spirit, II,” V.3, in *Works*, 1.



Wesley “propagated a strong view of the certainty instilled in the believer by the Spirit” that “often seemed the greatest novelty about Methodism.”<sup>464</sup> Conversely, it was the norm, not the exception, for Anglican Evangelicals to reject pretenses to direct consciousness of the workings of the Spirit. While Venn held that it was the height of impiety to reject the idea that the power of the Spirit could work on the soul, he also asserted that “this influence of the Holy Ghost is secret, and discernible only by its fruits.”<sup>465</sup> Walsh points out that this movement away from “sensible perceptions” of the Holy Spirit came out of the Evangelical Anglican desire to subdue the overt “enthusiasm” associated with Methodism and other irregular evangelical groups.<sup>466</sup>

Coleridge’s rejection of *direct* consciousness of the Spirit’s workings effectively locates him among the Anglican Evangelicals on another point. He did not reject the notion that the Spirit’s activity produced no discernable effects, even if that activity itself was not an object of consciousness. A certain amount of discernment through reflection guided by Scripture was necessary to ascertain whether potential effects of the Spirit were indeed truly from the Spirit. It was shown in chapter three that definitive for Anglican Evangelicals was an attempt to distance themselves from the “extravagant” pretensions of showings of the Spirit found in dissenting evangelical groups by locating most of the Spirit’s work within the confines of devotional practices, such as prayer and personal reflection, directed by meditation on Scripture. For instance, Venn again says that “the influence of the Holy Spirit is always correspondent to the written word, and preserved and increased in the use and the means of grace. He makes no new revelations, but gives success and efficacy to what is already revealed.”<sup>467</sup> Coleridge does not

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<sup>464</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 50.

<sup>465</sup> Venn, *Complete Duty*, 139.

<sup>466</sup> Walsh, “The Anglican Evangelicals,” 97.

<sup>467</sup> Venn, *Complete Duty*, 140.

make any substantial modifications to this conviction, but instead provides a defensible ground for holding this position by explaining why claims about direct revelations and impressions from the Spirit run contrary to a properly conceived philosophical psychology.

This sense of the effects of the Spirit's work brings into focus another element of Coleridge's thought that associates him with the larger evangelical movement. For Coleridge, redemption should produce in the believer affections of joy and gratitude toward God that then produce the fruit of good works, and that the love of God that these affections spring from should likewise engender a love of neighbor. This has strong affinities with a constellation of Wesley's statements. Wesley held that the Christian should stand in a relationship to God describable in this way: "he acquiesces in whatsoever appears to be [God's] will, not only with patience, but with thankfulness... the ruling temper of his heart is the most absolute submission and the tenderest gratitude to his sovereign benefactor."<sup>468</sup> Furthermore, "remembering that God is love, [the Christian] is conformed to the same likeness" and is thereby "full of love to his neighbour."<sup>469</sup> It is this love of God that is "productive of all right affections" and good works spring as the "daughter, not the parent, of [the Christian's] affection."<sup>470</sup> Wilberforce provides a similar description of the way in which true belief in and acceptance of God's working for our redemption should excite the affections toward deep gratitude and joy. Here he explicitly links a coldness of affection with the probability that a person does not have a real, living faith:

The Unitarian and Socinian indeed, who deny, or explain away the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, may be allowed to feel, and talk of these grand truths with little emotion. But in those who profess a sincere belief in them, this coldness is insupportable. The greatest possible services of a man to man must appear contemptible, when compared with "the unspeakable mercies of Christ;" mercies so dearly bought, so freely bestowed – A deliverance from eternal misery – The gift of "a crown of glory, that fadeth not away." Yet what judgement should we form of such conduct, as is here [in the case of affection toward God]

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<sup>468</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity*, I.3, in *John Wesley*.

<sup>469</sup> Wesley, *A Plain Account*, I.5

<sup>470</sup> Wesley, *A Plain Account*, I.6-7.

censured, in the case of any one who had received some signal services from a fellow creature? True love is an ardent, and an active principle — a cold, a dormant, a phlegmatic gratitude, are contradictions in terms. When these generous affections really exist in vigour, are we not ever fond of dwelling on the value, and enumerating the merits of our benefactor? How are we moved when any thing is asserted to his disparagement! How do we delight to tell of his kindness!<sup>471</sup>

The final doctrinal point that Coleridge expounded aligning him with the Anglican Evangelicals was his acceptance of a particular modulation of the doctrine of election. Even if all Anglican Evangelicals did not subscribe to the doctrine of election or moderate Calvinism<sup>472</sup>, moderate Calvinism and acceptance of some form of the doctrine of election was, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Church of England, almost exclusively the domain of the Evangelicals. And here Coleridge advances precisely the kind of circumscribed doctrine of election predominant in the moderate Calvinism of Anglican Evangelicals. He accepted the doctrine, but focused on election as it related to individual believers' lives and avoided delving into its possible speculative consequences. This doctrine was held because it conformed with a believer's individual experience of redemption, and Coleridge even echoed the idea of many Evangelicals that it *could* prove a stumbling block (so should not be preached about too frequently), and that it certainly should not be emphasized and revealed in.

The one point on which Coleridge may seem to have been at odds with evangelicals, including Anglican Evangelicals, was his understanding of redemption, but I believe that his understanding of redemption still places him squarely in the spirit of the Evangelical tradition, even if it put him in a somewhat more marginal place regarding how he drew doctrinal lines. It is important to emphasize that Coleridge's understanding of the doctrine did not actually align him

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<sup>471</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, 3.1.

<sup>472</sup> One must distinguish "moderate" Calvinism from Coleridge's "modern" Calvinism. When Coleridge refers to "Modern Calvinism," he describes what we would call Hyper-Calvinism rather than the moderate Calvinism held by Evangelicals, especially since his view of "modern" Calvinism includes thinkers he believed delved too far into speculation on God's eternal decrees and those who denied or reduced the role of human freedom.

more with some other theological tradition from the period. If one looks at the options that were prevalent in Britain at the time, one could follow some kind of moral exemplar view of Christ's work *or* some kind of substitutionary atonement. A recapitulationist/healing view, which is probably the closest to what Coleridge embraced, seems relatively unique in that time and place.

Furthermore, the position Coleridge puts forward still stood much closer to the logic behind substitutionary atonement than the theories of redemption advanced by more liberal strands of Christianity in Britain at the time. He does not reject the notion that humans have incurred guilt with penal consequences, and he has a robust doctrine of original sin and the human inability to extricate themselves from that sin. The point on which he really disagrees with substitutionary positions was his insistence that describing this guilt as "debt" in any but a metaphorical sense confused the relationship between things and people.

However, Coleridge may in fact have put forward a theory of redemption that simply codified and extended the logic of the Evangelicals of his time. As described in the previous chapter, nearly all evangelicals stressed the New Birth as something central to true Christianity, and this stress generally relegated the metaphysical mechanics making this New Birth possible to a secondary position. Additionally, Anglican Evangelicals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century may have generally ascribed to substitutionary atonement nominally, but they avoided speculative descriptions of this doctrine. When one combines these elements, *viz.*, a nominal acceptance of the doctrine and avoidance of undue speculation about it, one sees in Coleridge simply what may have been a theoretical explanation for how one could hold these two elements together. He ultimately left the actual mechanism of redemption in the realm of mystery and focused instead on what *could* be said about spiritual rebirth. It should also be noted that Coleridge does not *reject* substitutionary atonement *in toto*, and focused on how using substitutionary language served as an

important devotional and pastoral tool for engendering an appropriate gratitude toward God – a necessary sign of the Love of God – within believers. The emphasis on substitutionary atonement already had this strong devotional quality for evangelicals: focus on the blood of Christ, on Christ’s cross, on the suffering of Christ, etc. were often linked with how God’s work in Christ should elicit the appropriate posture of love and gratitude in the believer. Evangelicals embraced substitutionary atonement due to its *subjective* importance, but almost never because they felt a need to make salvation contingent on holding to a set of “right” doctrines.<sup>473</sup> Even while talking about how common substitutionary atonement was among evangelical thinkers, Bebbington states that “there was a bond between the atonement and the quest for sanctification” such that “the motive for spiritual growth was Calvary.”<sup>474</sup> Robert E. L. Strider, in his summary of Anglican Evangelical thought on the redemption also points to the fundamentally practical and devotional acceptance of some form of substitutionary atonement – an acceptance that allowed a certain elasticity in doctrinal formulation. True – many early Evangelicals expressed a view of redemption in “legalistic and substitutionary terms.”<sup>475</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>473</sup> And likely often because they wanted to remain true to the spirit of the Reformers (Calvin and Luther certainly held to forms of Substitutionary Atonement). In other words, with a high view of human sinfulness and guilt, the importance of the cross for salvation, and the sense of returning to the purer Reformation view of Christianity, many evangelicals likely held to substitutionary atonement not dogmatically but because they thought it an adequate enough theory. The same impulse that would have led evangelicals to avoid excessive (or any) speculation on doctrines and thus to really emphasize the need for precisely formulated statements of belief that required assent could also have the effect of preventing evangelicals from considering whether a doctrine really fit with their larger vision of the Christian life and love of God.

<sup>474</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 16.

<sup>475</sup> Robert E.L. Strider, “Jesus Christ the Redeemer,” in *Anglican Evangelicalism*, ed. Alexander Zabriskie (Philadelphia, PA: The Church Historical Society, 1943), 151. Maddox, summarizing the work of J.R. Renshaw on Wesley’s views on atonement, comes to a similar position about Wesley’s views. While Wesley may have focused on some form of substitutionary atonement, he was generally careful to see this as expressing first and foremost God’s mercy and love and only at some of his most careless moments as a means of emphasizing God’s wrath. The real concern of the Wesleys was (1) “to stress that the integrity of God’s character was not abrogated in the atoning work of Christ; and (2) their overriding emphasis was not on God’s wrath, but on the love of God in initiating and effecting our salvation. For the Wesleys, to preach the life, death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ was most fundamentally to preach ‘the love of God’” (Maddox, 106).

the evangelical is not primarily interested in formulating a dogmatic statement of the atonement which shall hold for all men and for all time. His chief interest is that, however explained and intellectually justified, the atonement shall be the most vivid and powerful fact in men's experience of Christianity. Evangelicals believe that the Lord Jesus died upon the Cross for the sins of men; that there is no other means of forgiveness; and that the cross was in consequence a necessity from the standpoint both of God and of man. They believe — yea, more, they know of a certainty—that through the cross man actually and personally has received remission of sin, and that the fruits of such remission are perceived in the lives of those who have received it.<sup>476</sup>

Furthermore, evangelicals like Wesley willingly used descriptions of redemption that recalled multiple atonement theories, including those of *Christus victor* and *moral exemplar*, further illustrating that they were less concerned with adhering to a particular doctrinal formulation than they were with which formulations preserved certain theological truths and were conducive to devotional desiderata. Substitutionary atonement was advanced not because it was seen as a necessary development from speculative theology, but because it explained Christ's redemptive work in a way that recognized the gravity of original sin, the full human reliance on God's work in Christ for salvation, and because it elicited appropriate dispositions toward growth in holiness in the believer. Thus, Coleridge may actually provide a fully consistent evangelical doctrine of the atonement in 1) making the New Birth central to salvation; 2) maintaining a strong tie between original sin and redemption; and 3) recognizing the subjective importance of various images of redemption for eliciting the proper disposition in believers.

What's more, a strand of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Evangelical thinking existed that *did* advance almost exactly the same approach to Christology and the redemption as Coleridge, moving beyond the cross *alone* as the location of Christ's reconciling work. Evangelicals such as Budd, Mandell, and Daniel Wilson emphasized "the whole of Christ's incarnate life" and looked to a "restorative dimension or 'new creation'" in Christ's redemptive work.<sup>477</sup> These thinkers did not

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<sup>476</sup> Strider, "Jesus Christ the Redeemer," 151-2.

disregard the importance of the cross, but, as Budd stated it, “Though God’s reconciling attitude had reached a climax at the cross, reconciliation had been demonstrated in the whole of Christ’s incarnate life.”<sup>478</sup> Likewise, “those whose theological interests extended beyond the customary emphasis on justification by faith” tended to look also “to the doctrine of adoption or union with Christ.”<sup>479</sup> While Ervine does point out that these thinkers formed “a minority of the Evangelical clergy,” he gives no indication that they were marginal or borderline in the Anglican Evangelical tradition.<sup>480</sup> They may have been a minority, but they were a minority of firmly Evangelical thinkers, indicating that Coleridge’s theological positions, though on the surface seeming to be out of line with the mainstream of Evangelical thought, actually echoed the positions of thinkers whose Evangelical credentials remain largely beyond questioning.<sup>481</sup>

Lastly, Coleridge, despite providing a deeper intellectual foundation for evangelical emphases, retains a certain methodological affinity with evangelicalism. While Coleridge sought to provide more philosophically defensible foundations for these positions, he still ultimately avoids deep metaphysical speculation on those elements of these doctrines that he does not believe bear significantly on the practice of the Christian life — only now the Christian life is meant to include growth in insight into the mysteries of God. Nevertheless, while he sought to provide philosophical explanations of doctrines such as original sin, the Trinity, and redemption,

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<sup>477</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 239.

<sup>478</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 239.

<sup>479</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 240.

<sup>480</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 239.

<sup>481</sup> This association as it applies to the atonement with this strand of more “holistic” Anglican Evangelicalism is important, because, as seen in the next chapter, Coleridge seems to have taken up some of their positions within Evangelical “culture” as well. For instance, this same group included many of those most willing to put forward non-inerrantist visions of Scripture, which Coleridge also sought to do. This would indicate not only that he shared similar concerns and came to similar theological conclusions, but that he may have consciously aligned himself to some degree in the Anglican theological milieu with this internal subset of Anglican Evangelicals.

he did not do this except insofar as these explanations were necessary for removing any objections that holding to them required descent into irrationality.

After approaching Coleridge's more detailed theological work, one is likely struck not only by its consistency with a general Reformation-Augustinian theological tradition (even if his rationale for this position shows remarkable ingenuity), but also how he does not give significant attention to doctrinal points that he did not address in his short Confessions of Faith. Insofar as those doctrinal convictions represented statements of belief like what one would find among early 19<sup>th</sup> century Evangelicals, Coleridge's more detailed theological expositions indeed leave his readers with a sense that he wanted to ensure the intellectual sustainability of an authentically Evangelical outlook on Christianity. Looking to those points where Coleridge entered into topics outside the scope of the more circumscribed doctrinal summaries, one still sees him directing his thought with the kind of pastoral logic employed by evangelicals *or* that he introduced and explained doctrines particular to the Evangelicals of his day not included in those summaries (as with his discussion of the doctrine of election). When one combines these features with the sense that Coleridge, despite a reputation for being hopelessly lost in a fog of impractical metaphysical speculation, avoids such speculation unless it must be marshalled to make defensible a position popularly held by Evangelicals (for instance, original sin or the Trinity), Coleridge appears all that much more to have been making explicit and defending a pervasive but largely implicit and non-systematic Evangelical theological outlook. In other words, one does not come away from Coleridge's more explicit theological work with the sense that his observation about the Evangelicals' lack of learning led him to abandon their approach; rather, one senses all the more that he wanted to rectify this deficiency *for the sake of the movement that he thought was saving the Church*. It remains to be seen whether Coleridge indeed exhibited the marks of belonging to



Evangelical culture (which I contend throughout this work are truly necessary to fully identify him as an Evangelical), but a combined look at his doctrinal commitments and deeper theological and philosophical explications of those commitments in these last two chapters show a man who very much shared a commitment to Evangelical thought.

## CHAPTER 6

### AN IMPERFECT SUN COLERIDGE AND THE ANGLICAN EVANGELICAL CULTURAL IMAGINARY

Samuel Taylor Coleridge produced a theology that explicated Christian doctrine with greater philosophical intentionality, consistency, and depth than not only nearly all other late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelical thinkers, but indeed most theologians, regardless of ideological commitment, of the time. At the same time, when one looks at both the core convictions and even method guiding his theology, Coleridge remained remarkably consistent with the views held by certain of his contemporary, un-controversially Evangelical, Anglicans. This discovery provides considerable evidence for an affinity between Coleridge and the Evangelicals and even for likely relationships of causation. Had I set out to describe the movement purely in terms of its thought-patterns, one could at this point claim with a high degree of confidence that Coleridge was some kind of Anglican Evangelical. However, I have contended throughout this work that religious identity involves not only a constellation of ideas, but also of other “cultural” markers such as sets of practices, forms of communication, and rhetorical styles. I now turn to arguing that Coleridge not only shared similar doctrinal and methodological commitments with Anglican Evangelicals, but that he also gradually adopted many of these marks of a distinctive Evangelical “culture.” Beyond providing a more comprehensive and precise description of Evangelicalism, I believe that this approach strengthens my case that Coleridge belongs within that identity nexus. Showing that Coleridge developed his philosophical theology in a way that preserved the theological emphases of moderate Anglican Evangelicalism while also using its rhetoric and larger cultural markers

moves one significantly from a position of seeing an interesting coincidence of ideas to positively identifying Coleridge as an Evangelical Anglican.<sup>482</sup>

This chapter begins by exploring *how* Coleridge expressed the ideas he held in common with Evangelicals in language that was likewise similar to how Evangelicals expressed these ideas themselves. This section moves beyond specific vocabulary and phrases to look at Coleridge's (admittedly modified at times) use of literary genres popular among evangelicals. Second I show that the authorities that Coleridge drew upon to ground his thinking and how he described his Christian identity mirror the constellation distinctive to Anglican Evangelicals. Third, Coleridge focused on the same polemical targets as evangelicals, viz., Unitarianism, Socinianism, and those forms of thought perceived to encourage or lead to them. Fourth, I will evaluate Coleridge's individual and corporate piety to show that his practices of prayer and regular self-examination and reflection were what one would expect from a self-avowed Anglican Evangelical. Fifth will be an exploration of Coleridge's sacramental and liturgical theology, and in particular his understanding of Baptism and conversion.<sup>483</sup> Finally, I look at Coleridge's position on the Church of England itself and how his view of ecclesial authority, its relationship to other Christian groups, and the nature of the *Book of Common Prayer* all could have come from moderate Anglican Evangelicals.

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<sup>482</sup> While I believe that the short biographical sketch in the conclusion will only strengthen this observation by placing the trajectory of Coleridge's thought in such focus that he begins to look more and more like an Evangelical Anglican the more that he self-consciously saw himself as returning to good standing in the Established Church, I believe that the current chapter will provide sufficient evidence to evaluate my central thesis. In other words, my attempt is to show that he *did* end up looking like a moderate Anglican Evangelical; *how* he ended up thinking, speaking, and acting that way is illuminating but a fuller treatment of the question can be postponed.

<sup>483</sup> These last four points will serve not only to demonstrate a larger cultural affinity with Evangelicals, but, particularly regarding the role of introspective piety, his baptismal thought, and his view of Anglican history, disassociate him even more from the forms of High Churchmanship available in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

I obviously cannot go through all of Coleridge's word choices and analyze their relationship to the particularities of evangelical speech, but I can point to a few examples that show Coleridge's use of locutions that one would not expect to find outside of evangelicalism. First, I look at two repeated phrases that relate to distinctive evangelical doctrinal emphases – one in relation to original sin and one in relation to redemption. Coleridge repeatedly used the term “Child of Wrath” or the plural “Children of Wrath” to describe the human condition resulting from Original Sin.<sup>484</sup> By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, almost no one without ties to the evangelical revival used the term approvingly (i.e., as an appropriate term to describe humans in a state of sin). John Wesley frequently used “children of wrath” in his exposition of original sin.<sup>485</sup> In publications from 1790-1799, “child of wrath” or “children of wrath” appeared as appropriate designations for the sinful condition of humanity (and about the doctrine of original sin) in a variety of works associated with the larger evangelical revival. For instance, Wesley's use of the term from his sermon on this topic resurfaced in *Methodism vindicated, from the charge of ignorance and enthusiasm*<sup>486</sup>, which, as the title suggests, sought to defend Methodist ideas and practices. The line “Savior can'st thou love a traitor? Can'st thou love a child of wrath?” appeared in the hymn “The Believer's Resolution” which itself was published in *A collection of hymns universally sung in chapels of the late Countess of Huntingdon*. Furthermore, those few instances where someone hostile to the movement used the phrase, or some variation of it, appear to have encountered it first in evangelical sources. For instance, Thomas Belsham's

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<sup>484</sup> One can look to Coleridge's short note “On Redemption” (SW&F 1500) or his “Confessio Fidei” (CN III 4005). While this phrase did not originate with the evangelicals – one sees it first in the English translation of Ephesians 2:3 (KJV) and it made its way more immediately into the *Catechism* in the Prayer Book – it is important to point out that evangelicals rarely *invented* their language. Often what was particular to their language was the emphasis on certain biblical words or phrases that others did not use with the same frequency or in the same way.

<sup>485</sup> In Wesley's “Original Sin,” this wording occurs at the beginning and in the fourth paragraph of the introduction.

<sup>486</sup> *Methodism vindicated, from the charge of ignorance and enthusiasm* (London, 1795), 30.

1798 review of William Wilberforce's *Real Christianity* uses this phrase four times. However, two of these are quotations from Wilberforce himself and two are from the verse in Ephesians that the phrase recalls; in any case, Belsham meant to demonstrate that Wilberforce propagated a deformed Christianity.<sup>487</sup>

The second image under consideration is the titular image of warmth and light. After his initial claim of Socinianism as a moon, Methodism as a stove, and his desire to have warmth and light united in some sun, Coleridge repeatedly returned to these images, particularly referencing the cold light of the moon and the unenlightening heat of a stove. In his *Lectures on Philosophy*, Coleridge states:

Will you find any pretence [sic] to light in that which has really no warmth? There is nothing in it that can be called tangible, nothing which presents motives or shapes itself to human imperfections. Allow the light, it is moonlight and moths float about in it. Again, those who reject all knowledge, who have wonderful incommunicable we know not what in the recesses of we know not where, and who scorn all knowledge and all the means of attaining it, we will say here again you have warmth, this may be a stove of life and crickets and other insects sing their inarticulate songs in it, but you must be as the lark, and rise and enjoy the warmth, and therein your own being will be made fit for its apportioned happiness and the extension of power which will come when the spring has been given. Then only will true philosophy be existing, when from philosophy it is passed into that wisdom which no man has but by the earnest aspirations to be united with the Only Wise in that moment when the Father shall be all in all (LP I 287).

Coleridge also employs this image in his *Lay Sermons* when describing the nature of faith, saying that “the light of religion is not that of the moon, light without heat; but neither is its warmth that of the stove, warmth without light” (LS 48).

What is interesting about this characterization is that it corresponds almost exactly to the language and sentiment of a quote by John Newton, who said:

A moonlight head knowledge however true is a poor thing, nor am I an admirer of those rapturous sallies, which are more owing to a warm imagination than to a just perception of gospel truth. The gospel addresses both head and heart; and where it is received as the word of God and is clothed with energy and authority of the Holy Spirit, the understanding is enlightened, the affections awakened and engaged, the will brought into subjection, and the whole soul delivered to its impress as wax to the seal.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> Thomas Belsham, *A Review of Mr. Wilberforce's treatise, entitled A practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians* (London, 1798), pp. 5, 44, 100, and 101.

<sup>488</sup> John Newton, *Works of Newton*, II, 18, quoted in James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1990), 86.

Importantly, Newton's quote comes from a letter that would have been published in 1780 as part of his *Cardiphonia* – a full 23 years before Coleridge's first notebook entry would echo this sentiment.<sup>489</sup> It is widely accepted that Newton's spiritual autobiography, the *Authentic Narrative*, partially inspired Wordsworth's *The Excursion* and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Given Newton's influence on William Cowper and the high esteem in which Coleridge held Cowper, it would make sense that Coleridge would have been led to Newton.<sup>490</sup> Coleridge's use of language so reminiscent of Newton's letter from around the same time that he would have been composing the *Ancient Mariner* indicates either a great coincidence or that Coleridge was reading and engaging with Newton's religious writings *and* appropriating his language.

Another element that Coleridge shared with evangelicals, and specifically Anglican Evangelicals, was the nature of “true” religion. One may distinguish this evangelical approach to “religion” from that of their contemporaries by pointing to a certain holism that permeated their conception of it. True forms of religiosity were not merely systems of belief requiring intellectual assent (through faith or reason), a set of moral laws, or some combination of the two. I have already partially alluded to this holism in describing the evangelical conception of faith as intimately related to growth in proper relationship with God, moving from a mode of language of belief to language of a “way of being.” Coleridge elaborated on this idea in his description of religion. In the *Lay Sermons*, Coleridge affirmed that

The elements (as it were) of Religion are Reason and Understanding. If the composition stopped in itself, an understanding thus rationalized would lead to the admission of the *general* doctrines of natural religion, the belief of a God, and of immortality; and probably to an acquiescence in the history and ethics of the Gospel. But still it would be a speculative faith, and in the nature of a THEORY; as if the main object of religion were to solve the difficulties for the satisfaction of the intellect. Now this state of mind, which alas is a state of too many among our self-entitled *rational* religionists, is a mere balance or compromise of the

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<sup>489</sup> For confirmation that Newton's letters were published in 1780 in the *Cardiphonia*, see L. E. Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1953), 409.

<sup>490</sup> Cf. Bernard Martin, *The Authentic Narrative and the Ancient Mariner* (London: W. Heinemann, 1949).

two powers, not that living and generative interpretation of both which would give being to *essential* Religion – to the RELIGION, at the birth of which “we receive the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. viii. 15, 16.)<sup>491</sup> In RELIGION there is no abstractions. (LS 89-90).

Coleridge reiterates a similar sentiment in *Aids to Reflection*. Speaking to those who have now been exposed to the tenets particular to Christianity, Coleridge goes on to say that “I should expect to overhear a troubled Murmur: How can I comprehend this? How is this to be proved? To the first question, I should answer: Christianity is not a Theory, or a Speculation; but a *Life*. Not a *Philosophy* of Life, but a Life and a living Principle” (AR 202).

One of the of the most important ways that this holism manifested itself was a feeling that faith required transformation and renewal in *all* aspects of a person’s existence. As a result, a distinctive aspect of evangelicalism, especially in Wesleyan Methodism, was a belief that Christian faith could and should transform the affections no less than any other part of the human person. Several thinkers have pointed that out a defining feature, and possibly an innovation, of evangelicalism was its understanding that the Christian life does not seek to subordinate or eliminate the passions/affections, but rather to properly order them – thus affirming them as a good within the totality of a human identity.<sup>492</sup> Phyllis Mack points to the preoccupation Methodists had with managing the emotions in her analysis of the movement: “By developing better habits of eating and exercise, sleeping and dreaming, reading and thinking, the individual [Methodist] tried to master ‘bad’ feelings like anger or envy while nurturing ‘good’ feelings like compassion or tenderness.”<sup>493</sup> The necessity of properly ordered affections for the Christian life

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<sup>491</sup> John Wesley uses these same verses from Romans in several of his sermons, including his discussions of the assurance and witness of the Spirit (Sermon 9, “The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption”; Sermon 10, “The witness of the Spirit, I”; and Sermon 11, “The Witness of the Spirit, II,” all in *Works*, 1:248-298),

<sup>492</sup> For instance, Theodore Runyon makes the argument that one of the greatest contributions to theological thinking that came from the Wesleyan movement was a conception not only of orthodoxy (correct thinking) and orthopraxy (correct thought), but also orthopathy, or correct feeling (Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998]).

was not confined to Wesleyan Methodism, though – prominent Anglican Evangelicals also expressed similar positions. William Wilberforce cautioned against rejecting a proper intensity of religious affection, even saying that humans have been “duped” into accepting that the “species of Religion which is opposite to the warm and affectionate kind” alone deserves the title of “rational religion.”<sup>494</sup> Real Christianity should excite “a zeal tempered with prudence, softened with meekness, soberly aiming at great ends by the gradual operation of well adapted means, supported by a courage which no danger can intimidate, and a quiet constancy, which no hardships can exhaust.”<sup>495</sup>

Coleridge likewise believed that true Christianity produced proper gratitude and joy at God’s work, and from these affections good works – properly conceived – could flow. Likewise, Coleridge’s persistent desire to “unite warmth and light” implied that proper religion could not be pure emotivism, but neither could it be an intellectualism with no regard for due emotional fervor. In *Aids to Reflection* he expressed that Christianity should not be indifferent to emotional states, but should instead properly order those states, particularly in relation to doing one’s Christian duty. In the aphorism “The Christian no Stoic,” Coleridge modifies one of Leighton’s statements to say that Stoicism of all the ancient philosophies came closest to Christianity, but was still opposed to it because Stoicism “attaches the highest honor (or rather, attaches honor *solely*) to the person that acts virtuously in spite of his feelings or who has raised himself above the conflict by their extinction” (AR 96). Christianity, on the other hand, “instructs us to place small reliance on a Virtue that does not *begin* by bringing the Feelings to a conformity with the

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<sup>493</sup> Mack, *Heart Religion*, 15.

<sup>494</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, III.2.

<sup>495</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, III.1.



Commands of the Conscience,” and one should actually see Christianity such that “its especial aim, characteristic operation, is to moralize the affections” (AR 96).

Moving from distinctive language to broader literary forms, one sees in two of the significant prose works relating specifically to religion that Coleridge published<sup>496</sup> in the period under consideration a developing concern for Evangelical themes.<sup>497</sup> Specifically, one can see the *Biographia Literaria* as Coleridge (partially) employing an evangelical literary genre, namely the evangelical conversion narrative. In a different way, the publication of *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, even if it did not follow specifically an evangelical literary genre, demonstrates the centrality of the Bible for Coleridge’s Christianity and that his mode of interpretation maintains many of the features of biblical interpretation distinctive to evangelicals.<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Or, in the case of *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, intended to publish.

<sup>497</sup> One of the most important, and specific, genres of evangelical literature – and one of the primary means of catechizing and developing piety – was the hymn. A version of this argument could see Coleridge as also doing “hymn writing,” insofar as hymns would have been seen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century not only as a song form, but also as poems, and Coleridge was early in his poetic career strongly influenced by William Cowper’s *Olney Hymns*. However, while Coleridge did continue writing poetry after his return to orthodoxy, and there is a way of seeing his self-conception as a poet as influenced by evangelicalism, these connections are more indirect and would warrant a stand-alone work. Hopefully it will suffice to speak to Coleridge’s recognition of the importance of hymnody when we arrive at the section on his personal piety.

<sup>498</sup> Coleridge does not present anything like a boilerplate Evangelical publication. Coleridge’s own idiosyncrasies come out and the reader is clearly dealing with a thinker who always sought to work creatively with genre conventions. However, this idiosyncratic nature was idiosyncratic *within a particular tradition*, and needs not point toward his belonging to a kind of *sui generis* religious tradition. If I am correct and Coleridge adopted a form of moderate Anglican Evangelicalism, it would seem right to think of this in some ways as the *idealized* version of this form –not its most *common manifestation*. Coleridge never ceased being one of Britain’s premier Romantic poets and thinkers, but even this further underscores his uniqueness. It was not uncommon for Romantic thinkers across Europe to follow a life trajectory in which they went from an early political and religious radicalism to a late life return to conservative and even reactionary views. However, whereas “the Romantics were often inclined to employ religious terms and idioms in an aesthetic mode without any deep commitment to traditional religious tenets,” Coleridge, on the other hand, gave “reflections on culture, church, and state” that “are perfectly genuinely; it is not an ironic mask” (Hedley, 265). A return to a *truly living* understanding of traditional Christianity made Coleridge unique among British Romantics; one cannot but expect that he would likewise be unique in his religious tradition as well. Indeed, if one can come to see Coleridge as *the* luminary mind for second generation British evangelical thought, one can expect him to stand apart from more unreflective or popular forms of the movement; certainly, if one were to compare popular Methodist beliefs from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with those of John and Charles Wesley, one would perhaps find it difficult to locate the movement’s *founders* within the Methodist “mainstream.”

It may seem strange to present the *Biographia* as a kind of evangelical conversion narrative. Even those with a cursory understanding of Coleridge's prose would respond that the *Biographia Literaria* presented Coleridge's mature theory of the imagination and *literary* criticism. Indeed, for many years after Coleridge's death, readers saw the *Biographia* principally as a work of literary criticism.<sup>499</sup> However, as could be seen as the work unfolds, Coleridge's thinking, particularly in his mature period, was highly unitive and generally oriented toward the ultimate goal of a theo-philosophical vision. While it is true that the *length* of the explicitly philosophical chapters resulted from Coleridge's desire to "enlarge the scope" of the work, I think that one of the advantages of seeing this as either a kind of evangelical conversion narrative or at the very least a proto-conversion narrative (more on what this may mean will come soon) helps to explain some of the work's seeming discontinuity.<sup>500</sup>

Bruce Hindmarsh's now authoritative study, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, surveys and gives insight into one of the most important literary genres and forms of piety for the evangelical revival. Any discussion of spiritual autobiography must begin with Augustine. While St. Augustine's *Confessions* stands as an archetype of spiritual autobiography, it was not only "unlike any of the models provided by ancient biographers," but it also stood alone within the genre of "spiritual autobiography" (the evangelical form can be seen as a sub-genre) until after the Renaissance.<sup>501</sup> Much of the reason for this was that a particular constellation of ideational and material forces not present until modernity had to come together to make "contemporary" autobiography a viable popular genre. For instance, as *autobiography* and therefore an

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<sup>499</sup> James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, Editor's Introduction (BL xli). Although this may have as much or more to do with a sense that the other facets of the work were of little comparative value to most readers, not to anything intrinsic to the work or Coleridge's intentions.

<sup>500</sup> Engell and Bate, Editor's Introduction (BL lii).

<sup>501</sup> Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

“apologetic of the individual” and “one of the ways to answer the question of what life *means*,” a large scale acceptance of this genre required “an *individualist* self-identity.”<sup>502</sup> It is this individualist understanding of self-identity that provides a societal framework in which “displaying myself as the unique product of my own choices” will be taken seriously.<sup>503</sup> Thus the modern autobiography not only bears many narrational similarities to the novel, but many of the same social and intellectual forces led to the development and promulgation of both genres.<sup>504</sup>

As to the *spiritual* dimension, conversion as seen in Augustine’s and evangelical narratives did not become a significant part of spiritual autobiography until the early modern period because of medieval European Christianity’s particular conditions: “If early medieval converts were, so to speak, not Christian enough to write a conversion narrative like Augustine’s, later spiritual autobiographers, as they appeared beginning in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, were, on the contrary, too Christian.”<sup>505</sup> Conversion for later medieval thinkers meant entrance into monastic life, with the Latin *conversio* denoting “not principally the transition from pagan to Christian, but the passage of a Christian into the life of a religious.”<sup>506</sup> Before the evangelical narrative could become possible, a form that understood conversion more like Augustine’s movement from paganism or non-Christianity to true Christianity, a culture had to emerge in which it was conceivable to see individuals within that culture as not truly Christian. The broader answer to how this was initially possible was the Reformation, but specifically it was the development of pietistic movements. In England, it was the movement (or conflagration of

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<sup>502</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 5.

<sup>503</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 6.

<sup>504</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 6.

<sup>505</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 23.

<sup>506</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 23.

movements) that would come to be labeled “Puritanism,” and which saw the English church as only “halfly reformed,” that made it possible to call into question the assumption that being born in a “Christian” country proved sufficient for “real” Christianity.<sup>507</sup> Puritanism made space in the British religious social imaginary for this distinction, and it was a distinction in many ways central to evangelical self-identity as well. Together these two forces, the rise of an individualist self-identity and the emergence of a sense of difference between “real” and “nominal” Christianity<sup>508</sup>, laid a foundation for the emergence of evangelical conversion narrative as a possible literary genre and didactic and devotional tool.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century England, despite similarities uniting them into a single “genre,” the forms and purposes of conversion narratives differed depending on what branch and stage of the revival they were associated with. I will limit my discussion to the features of the *Anglican* evangelical conversion narrative and bring the two main Methodist forms into discussion to highlight how the Anglican form stood apart. For developing a conception of the commonalities and range of possible differences within Anglican Evangelical narratives, Hindmarsh focused on autobiographies produced by three important figures in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Anglican Evangelicalism: John Newton, William Cowper, and Thomas Scott. Hindmarsh describes the common structure of each of these narratives in the following way:

The subject progressed from childhood religious impressions to adolescent anxiety about sin and damnation, and then there followed a degeneration into worldliness and a state of hardness of heart. Each author went on to relate the spiritually corrosive influence of Deist ideas and his ignorance of the leading themes of the gospel. As so often in all these narratives, conscience was painfully awakened as each was made aware of the unattainable ideal represented in God’s moral law, but at first it was only a ‘legal repentance’ that followed—an attempt at personal reformation in one’s own strength. Then followed a crisis of moral and spiritual insufficiency, the pivot upon which each conversion narrative turned. Each author came to learn that the gospel held forth a promise of God’s gracious and complete forgiveness, but the personal hope awakened thereby was deferred. After a period of waiting, in which each one’s helplessness was made plain, each made an ‘evangelical repentance,’ renouncing self-sufficiency and casting himself on the mercy of God in Christ’s atonement. Psychological relief accompanied this

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<sup>507</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 34.

<sup>508</sup> As well as the beginnings of a sense of self-avowed non- or anti-Christian belief.

experience, and the subject bore witness to a transformed perspective on all of life, credited to having been inwardly regenerated by the Spirit of God.<sup>509</sup>

The other two prominent forms of evangelical conversion narrative in 18<sup>th</sup> century England developed out of Methodism, and while each shares certain overlapping features with the Anglican form,<sup>510</sup> they provide a helpful foil to highlight its distinctive features. The first narratives to emerge in the Revival were lay accounts of conversions resulting from exposure to Revival preaching. Sometimes these were prompted by the published journals of early leaders, but more often than not these lay Methodist conversion accounts formed an oral genre, either presented during class and band meetings or transcribed in letters for the pastors who had provided the homiletic occasion for their conversion. Beyond being a largely oral form, these accounts shared a number of themes in common: a focus on novelty in terms of the Christian ideas being expressed, the sense of awakening as an individual in one's experience before God, a simultaneous experience of being part of a larger Methodist movement and sharing in a common pattern of life, and an intense, almost unmediated, emotionalism or "white hot piety," especially when compared with the published accounts of the clergy and lay preachers in the movement.<sup>511</sup>

The published lives of Wesley's Lay Preachers represent the other dominant Methodist form of conversion narrative. These accounts were originally published in Wesley's *Arminian Magazine* to combat the "poison" of Calvinism at work in other branches of the evangelical Revival, and, importantly for the genre in England, represented "a progression of conversion from the oral and manuscript culture of Lay autobiography to the public culture of the printed

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<sup>509</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 284.

<sup>510</sup> Hindmarsh focuses on the so-called "Olney Autobiographies," a reference to the style of Evangelical conversion narrative that developed in the circle of figures associated with John Newton in his Olney Parish.

<sup>511</sup> See Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, ch. 4 "White Hot Piety: The Early Methodist Lay People."

page.”<sup>512</sup> In addition to belonging to a more codified literary format, these accounts have a more explicitly didactic purpose.<sup>513</sup> These were conscious attempts to use conversion as a principle hermeneutical key for retrospectively looking over the entire course of these ministers’s lives, attempting to read their subsequent life of sanctification (and possibly entire sanctification), ministry, and holy death as a continuation of initial conversion or as repetitions of the originary conversion experience. These narratives show a remarkable degree of coherence, particularly in communicating the Arminian Methodist vision of the Christian life, in large part because of John Wesley’s almost obsessive need to regulate his preachers and their narratives. As with almost everything Wesley allowed to be published for the edification of those in his spiritual care, he exercised a significant degree of editorial oversight prior to publication.<sup>514</sup> Additionally, there was the uniformity of experience that came from the “unique literary subculture deriving from Methodist organization and discipline.”<sup>515</sup> Wesley’s preachers were formed through contact with Wesley in his Connexion and their “entire literary environment—what they read and what they wrote—was under Wesley’s strict supervision.”<sup>516</sup> Self-formation and self-interpretation were central features of all autobiographical endeavors, with authors almost always putting the individual facts of their lives within some larger pattern. In the case of Wesley’s preachers, it was not a general pattern that allowed for significant personalization and autonomous appropriation by individual autobiographers, but instead was the very immediate and specific

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<sup>512</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 233.

<sup>513</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 260.

<sup>514</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 240.

<sup>515</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 241.

<sup>516</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 241.

direction of John Wesley himself and the culture he engendered, leading to a much narrower pattern to which these narratives were made to conform.

The Anglican Evangelical sub-genre shares important features with both forms of Methodist spiritual autobiography. Like the lives of the lay preachers, they were more consciously exercises in self-formation and interpretation and were intentionally a written exercise: “Newton and Scott were well educated, and Cowper was a distinguished man of letters. Accordingly, their autobiographies are characterized not only by an act of retrospection, but also by a degree of literary creativity that turned life into art.”<sup>517</sup> Similarly, while the primary purpose of these Anglican Evangelicals was self-interpretation and not necessarily providing spiritual guidance for future pilgrims, that does not mean that such a goal was unimportant. As Thomas Scott said in the preface to *The Force of Truth*, he hoped that it could be employed by God “as an instrument for advancing his glory, and the salvation of souls.”<sup>518</sup>

Unlike the *Lives*, and in common with the lay versions, the Anglican accounts exhibited a much higher degree of individuation. In line with the generally staid Anglican Evangelical approach to outward emotional displays, these accounts are less likely to convey the kind of raw emotionalism of the lay Methodist accounts, but they also are not attempts at creating consistent spiritual templates for others. There was a shared sense of understanding conversion according to a broadly Calvinist typology, and they shared a general narrative structure, but these biographers still “stand out from the page as vivid individuals.” Unlike many other spiritual autobiographers where “there is very little sense of the unique personality of the writer,” a strong distinguishing feature of *Anglican* Evangelical conversion narrative was the capacity of the authors to

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<sup>517</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 264.

<sup>518</sup> Thomas Scott, *The Force of Truth* (1779), preface to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

distinguish “themselves as unique” and to develop “the tradition of spiritual autobiography in novel ways.”<sup>519</sup> Thus, a main distinguishing characteristic of the Anglican Evangelical conversion narratives was a capacity to accommodate a broader range of literary styles and narrative developments within a still discernible common framework.

It is possible to see the significant similarities between Coleridge’s *Biographia* and the Anglican sub-genre, as well as have a framework for explaining deviations from the standard pattern. In the autobiographical portions of the *Biographia*, Coleridge expresses something that shares the contours of the Anglican narrative. He begins by saying that as a youth he had bewildered himself “in metaphysics, and in theological controversy”; however, he came to seek “a refuge from bodily pain and mismanaged sensibility in abstruse researches, which exercised the strength and subtlety of the understanding without awakening the feelings of the heart” (CL 15, 17). At Cambridge and immediately after he became a “zealous Unitarian in Religion; more accurately, [he] was a *psilanthropist*, one of those who believe our Lord to have been the real son of Joseph, and who lay the main stress on the resurrection rather than on the crucifixion” (BL 180). Furthermore, he recognized that his “opinions were indeed in many and most points erroneous” (BL 180). He became zealous for the cause of Unitarian “enlightened religion” and even named his child after David Hartley. However, Coleridge arrived at a crisis point after the failure of the French Revolution and its connection to the kind of thorough-going Enlightenment philosophy to which he had attached himself (BL 199). This led him to a period of solitude and reflection in which he explored other philosophical opinions, as well as the “books of Revelation,” finally culminating in his awareness through Kant of “a certain guiding truth” whereby there was no “legitimate argument” that could be brought against reconciling

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<sup>519</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 285.



“personality with infinity” (BL 201). This led to him to being *philosophically* capable of holding “the *idea* of the Trinity a fair scholastic inference” despite remaining “in respect of revealed religion a zealous Unitarian” (BL 204). While this metaphysical difference that developed in Coleridge’s thought between the Unitarianism (and mechanism) of Hartley and others may have proved a kind of preparation for returning to orthodox Christianity, it still took a “more thorough revolution in [his] philosophic principles, and a deeper insight into [his] own heart” before he could have a “final re-conversion” from Unitarianism to Christianity (BL 205).

Some significant parallels certainly exist between the overarching structure of the Anglican Evangelical conversion narrative and that of Coleridge’s movement to Unitarianism and back to orthodox, Trinitarian Christian belief. With the Olney autobiographies, Coleridge begins with initial metaphysical inclinations (like the inchoate childhood religious impressions) that he deadens himself to through a turn to ease and bodily comfort (like the turn toward worldliness). Thence Coleridge gives himself over to Unitarianism religiously and a mechanistic materialism philosophically. Coleridge experiences a crisis of faith in his Enlightenment optimism in the sufficiency of human reason for religion, leading to a period of preliminary philosophical conversion from materialism to a hybrid Platonic and German Idealism, and finally issuing in a full conversion from Unitarian to orthodox Christianity. If one sees the broad contours of the Olney autobiographies as exhibiting an *exitus-reditus* structure where the crisis point leading to repentance (broadly conceived) yields a two-stage partial and then complete conversion, then Coleridge’s autobiographical material in the *Biographia* certainly fits this structure. This pattern of partial/complete conversion is particularly significant in the Anglican Evangelical conversion tradition; even in the lives of the Methodist preachers, where important events after an initial conversion to Christianity are read as echoes or recapitulations of the

primary conversion, there is not the same sense of this principle conversion's insufficiency. Furthermore, Coleridge's introductory quote from Goethe states that "Er wünscht der Jugend die Umwege zu ersparen, auf denen er sich selbst verirrt" ("He wishes to spare the young those circuitous paths, on which he himself had lost his way"), signaling that he saw a certain didactic purpose in the presentation of his autobiography (BL 3).

While Coleridge follows the same broad outline of the Olney autobiographies, there are also many significant points where this comparison could be called into question. To begin with, Coleridge frames so much of his personal, intellectual, and spiritual development in terms of philosophical movements and he spends a considerable part of the work on explicit philosophical critique and exposition that are not autobiographical in nature (cf. chapters 5-9). Additionally, Coleridge states that his autobiographical material exists as a kind of structure to give continuity to the work so he can present "an introduction to the statement of [his] principles in Politics, Religion, and Philosophy, and the application of the rules, deduced from philosophical principles, to poetry and criticism" (BL 5). Hence, when one combines the philosophical chapters with those that deal with the practical application to poetry and criticism, one gets the sense that this other work takes nearly as much room as the autobiographical material.

However, this principle objection can be addressed in several ways, all of which reconcile this apparent dissonance between Coleridge's stated purpose and written material and the claim that this work broadly belongs to the genre of Anglican Evangelical conversion narrative. First, because Anglican Evangelicals presented narratives that brought the idiosyncrasies and distinguishing features of the authors to the fore, it would make sense that Coleridge, who identified himself as a philosophical poet, would, if he were to craft a conversion narrative, do so with the categories of his literary and philosophical development. Second, there

is precedent for interpreting one's spiritual development and conversion as having come from a series of philosophical investigations. No less than St. Augustine's *Confessions* shares this feature with Coleridge's *Biographia*. That Coleridge likely had Augustine in mind in interpreting the shape of his life comes through in the explicit comparison Coleridge draws between the way in which his developing metaphysical views acted as a kind of *preparatio evangelii* just as Augustine's exposure to Platonism helped to free him from Manichaeism (BL 205). While not explicitly invoked by Coleridge, Thomas Scott provides a more contextually proximate precedent for an Anglican Evangelical's conversion narrative being presented as a series of spiritual changes consequent upon philosophical investigation. As Hindmarsh points out, for "Scott there were to be no providential deliverances or near-death turning points, no demons or psychomachy, no signs of mental instability," but instead an "intensely dialectical" narrative of the "progressive demolition of his arguments for unbelief and his reluctant capitulation to evangelical views as he was propelled by the 'force of truth.'"<sup>520</sup>

One may see the sheer amount of non-autobiographical material in the *Biographia* as a critique against understanding it as an instance of conversion narrative, but multiple responses at least temper this. If one looks at the explicitly philosophical chapters (5-9 and 12-13), one sees Coleridge providing arguments against the positions he had rejected and in favor of the positions he eventually accepted. Thus, while the organization of the work can at times appear erratic (more on this below), the philosophical exposition is not part of an intellectual potpourri unrelated to the autobiographical material. Second, whereas others generally wrote conversion narratives with the express purpose of interpreting their lives through the experience of conversion, Coleridge had pressure from prior publishing commitments while putting together

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<sup>520</sup> Hindmarsh, *Conversion Narrative*, 278.

his autobiography. The origins of what would become the *Biographia Literaria* originated with differences between him and William Wordsworth, particularly as they manifested themselves in the views of poetry Wordsworth included in the *Preface* to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. This morphed into a full intent to write a preface to his poetry by 1811, and Wordsworth's own preface to his poetry published in 1815 (the year the *Biographia* was composed) remained constantly in Coleridge's view as he wrote his own work.<sup>521</sup> So both in his proposal to his publisher and at least part of his internal motivation for writing, Coleridge intended to write an apology for his own literary career and work. Furthermore, one can partially conceive of the *Biographia* as two separate works. Coleridge had largely finished chapters 1-3 and 14-22 (which comprise his "literary life" and his literary criticism) by August 10, 1815, having seen what would become the philosophical and more extended autobiographical chapters (5-13) as "of minor significance."<sup>522</sup> He wrote the "philosophical chapters" in about a month and then inserted them into the middle of the *Biographia* manuscript. Their expansion indicates that Coleridge, as he wrote his literary life and criticism, came to see deeper exposition of his metaphysical views either as essential to the understanding of the literary criticism or as of greater significance in the order of his thinking; indeed these chapters would come to represent almost 45 percent of the entire finished work.<sup>523</sup> One may more accurately say then that rather than interpreting the *Biographia* as a whole as a conversion narrative, it is a *sui generis* work composed of many genres that includes within it a partial conversion narrative.

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<sup>521</sup> Engell and Bates, Editor's Introduction (BL xliv-li).

<sup>522</sup> Engell and Bate, Editor's Introduction (BL lv).

<sup>523</sup> Engell and Bate, Editor's Introduction (BL lv-lvi).

One cannot avoid Coleridge's omission of certain elements that seem essential to the evangelical conversion narrative. For instance, Coleridge does not indicate a feeling of an entire dependence on God's saving grace as he returned to orthodox Christianity. However, Coleridge composed most of the *Biographia* in 1815, which was the same year that he underwent one of his most extreme spiritual crises relating to laudanum usage. That he does not provide a work of the same coherence or polish as other conversion narratives (or even his own other prose works), and that he does not include all the common elements of other such narratives could be because of the tremendous stress he was under while composing the work; because his conversion may have been, so to speak, *in media res* while he was writing; or some combination of both.

At the same time, one should not under-emphasize the similarities between Coleridge's autobiographical work and that of Anglican Evangelicals. His first *Confessio Fidei*, which pointed to a Christianity amenable to Evangelicals, was written in 1810, so Coleridge may have already had encounters with Evangelicals that would lead to increasing acceptance of the movement in the years before his composition of the *Biographia*. In 1814, Hannah More wrote to William Wilberforce that, in meeting Coleridge, she found him "very eloquent, entertaining, and brimfull of knowledge. Added to this he seemed to have great reverence for Evangelical religion and considerable acquaintance with it."<sup>524</sup> This personal familiarity with Evangelicalism only grew in the following year; in early 1815 Coleridge had become acquainted with Thomas Methuen's beliefs to a point of being able to say that he was "far nearer to Mr. T. Methuen's Creed" than to that of others in the Church of England and maintained a relationship with Methuen enough to be able to speak of their shared beliefs on Baptism in a letter from August 2, 1815. It is unlikely, given that Methuen's only substantial (and potentially only) published work

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<sup>524</sup> Hannah More, unpublished letter (quoted in CM III 507).

was his autobiography,<sup>525</sup> that Methuen would not have presented his beliefs within the context of his personal narrative. Finally, September 17, 1815, Coleridge wrote to John M. Gutch that he had come to see his autobiography (the *Biographia*) as his “main work” and as the “Pioneer to the great Work on the *Logos*, Divine and Human, on which I have set my Heart and hope to ground my ultimate reputation” (CL 586). Thus, while Coleridge was writing the *Biographia*, he was explicitly acknowledging that affinity with Evangelical thought that Hannah More the year before had sensed and conveyed to William Wilberforce; then, as he was expanding the philosophical and autobiographical chapters of the *Biographia*, he shifted his focus from the literary to the philosophical and theological.

Interpreting the *Biographia Literaria* in its entirety as an evangelical conversion narrative may be overzealous; the work is multi-faceted both in its origins and purposes. Nevertheless, one thread of Coleridge’s spiritual autobiography follows a similar interpretative pattern as the distinctively Anglican Evangelical conversion narrative. This occurred while Coleridge was explicitly expressing affinity with Evangelical thought and had spent considerable time with an Anglican Evangelical. Whether he intentionally appropriated this format is not clear. Even if it were, we do not know if his exposure to this genre was primarily informal via conversation with Methuen and his reading of Newton’s autobiography in the 1790s, or if he had read more extensively in Evangelical narratives.<sup>526</sup> In the end, what is important is that Coleridge had been formed theologically to such an extent at the time of writing the *Biographia* that he was at least inchoately interpreting the shape of his life according to a broadly Anglican Evangelical pattern.

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<sup>525</sup> Methuen’s work is about as close as one may come to an archetypical Anglican Evangelical conversion narrative.

<sup>526</sup> The likelihood that he was familiar with William Cowper’s autobiography is high, given how formative he considers Cowper on his early poetic and intellectual development.

The other work to be considered in relation to Coleridge's potential Evangelicalism is *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, a work presenting Coleridge's understanding of the nature and role of Scripture in the believer's life. The ultimate purpose of this work is to ask the question of whether it is necessary to believe that the Bible was not "alone *inspired by*, i.e., composed by men under the actuating influence of, the Holy Spirit; but likewise—dictated by an Infallible Intelligence—that the Writers each & all were divinely *informed* as well as inspired" (SW&F 1123). Coleridge gives several reasons for his denying this position. If the Bible were the infallible, dictated Truth from Absolute Intelligence, then this would necessarily be an Article of Faith. However, while he believes that there are many instances of words and events recorded in the Scriptures that came directly from God, claims to the *recording* of these events of divine origin themselves being directly from God are incredibly rare and, even when they do occur, have obscure meanings. Coleridge believes that this rarity and obscurity provide strong evidence against Scripture's divine dictation. If true, this claim would be "a most important & (if not fundamental yet) essential Article," which cannot be squared with how "obscurely" and "obstinately" this concept had actually been "declared and enjoined" in Scripture (SW&F 1126).

Coleridge argues further that the very possibility of holding to divine dictation and infallibility implies a certain contradiction. Accepting direct divine communication of the "letters and articulate sounds by which the word is conveyed to our human apprehensions" ultimately requires that one hold the contradictory claim that "absolute Infallibility" is "blended with fallibility," since it would require that "infallible truth be infallibly conveyed in defective and fallible expressions" (SW&F 1127). However, that Coleridge rejected this doctrine because it entails a contradiction does was not really about the contradiction *per se*, but because collapsing perfect and infallible Truth into fallible and limited human utterances leads to fanaticism and

superstition. Coleridge believed that superstition was essentially the same as idolatry, i.e., mistaking something inferior (and generally material) for something higher (and generally spiritual). In other words, Coleridge rejected this doctrine in large part because it leads to “Bibliolatry,” or the “literal Rendering of Scripture in passages, which the number and variety of images employed in different places to express one and the same verity plainly mark out for figurative” (SW&F 1142).

Finally, and most damning in his eyes, Coleridge believed that a doctrine of verbal inspiration destroyed the Bible’s living and spiritually efficacious nature; it “petrifies at once the whole Body of Holy Writ” (SW&F 1134). This language of the destruction of the “living” nature of Scripture is only partially metaphorical: Coleridge thought that the doctrine destroys the real, spiritually struggling individuals presented through Scripture. Throughout history, the Bible has provided a model, through the authors’s own acts of composition, of humanity “actuated by a pure and Holy Spirit” (SW&F 1134). But if these various authors were influenced in ways that eliminated their own acts of will, then the Bible *in its existence as a literary creation* can no longer guide and direct actual human existence, and can only be an object of awe and worship<sup>527</sup>:

But let me once be persuaded that all these heart awakening Utterances of *human* Hearts, of Men of like faculties and passions with my own, mourning, rejoicing, suffering, triumphing, are but a “Comedia Divina” of a superhuman – O bear with me, if I say–Ventriloquist–that the Royal Psalmist Harper, to whom I <have so often> submit<ed> myself as a many as a “many-stringed Instrument” for his fire-tipt fingers to travers, while every several nerve of emotion, passion, thought that thrids [sic] the *flesh-and-blood* of ~~my~~ our common Humanity, responds to the Touch–that this sweet Psalmist of Israel was <himself> as mere an instrument as his Harp, an *automaton* Poet, Mourner, & Supplicant–all is gone! all sympathy, at least, all *example!* I listen in awe and fear, but likewise in perplexity and confusion of Spirit (SW&F 1136).

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<sup>527</sup> I cannot help but wonder if Coleridge here meant to extend to the Bible the logic of Article 28 “Of the Lords Supper,” which states that “the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is Faith./ The Sacrament of the Lords Supper was not by Christs ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.” Since Coleridge will ultimately propose that the living reality of Scripture as a means of communion with God must be received through faith, this would seem an important parallel. This would also mean that Coleridge meant to draw a parallel between the sacramental “idolatry” of Roman Catholics contained in this article and the “Bibliolatry” of many “Protestants,” essentially saying that the *truly* reformed position on Scripture would be his own presented here.



While Coleridge rejected its *plenary* form, he still maintained a remarkably high view of inspiration and had no desire to lessen the authority or importance of the Bible. He held to its full inspiration, believing that it was “composed by men under the actuating influence of, the Holy Spirit” (SW&F 1123). He accepted not only the historical veracity of numerous events and speeches recorded in Scripture, but also divine and miraculous origins for many of them. Coleridge stated that “with my full persuasion of Soul respecting all the articles of the Christian Faith as contained in the four first Classes, I receive willingly the *truth* of the History, namely that the Word of the Lord *did* come to Samuel, to Isaiah, &c., & that the which gave utterance to the same, are faithfully recorded” (SW&F 1124). Later he asserted this claim with greater force, stating that “whatever is referred by the sacred Penman to a direct communication from God, and wherever it is recorded, that the Subject of the History had asserted himself to have received this or that command, this or that information or assurance from a supernatural Intelligence... I receive the same with full belief, and admit its unappealable authority” (SW&F 1130-1). He rejected that the “faithful *Recording* of such [words and actions] does not of itself imply or seem to require any supernatural Working—other than as all Truth and Goodness is such” (SW&F 1124). Coleridge never denied that the Bible is “the appointed Conservatory, an indispensable Criterion” for judging Articles of Faith and contains the whole of Christian religion, but only the notion that it is a “*Creed*, consisting *wholly* of Articles of Faith” (SW&F 1144).<sup>528</sup>

While preempting potential challenges posed by modern critical scholarship may have partially motivated the writing of this work, the more important reason appears to have been the

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<sup>528</sup> Even if he thought it wrong to find easy and trivializing solutions to apparent contradictions or inconsistencies in scripture, these apparent conflicts still had to be amenable to some reconciliation (even if we are not privy to it). While accepting the real humanity of the various authors of Scripture, he still thought it necessary to constantly strive for the reconciliation between the truth of the Logos and Scripture: “If between this Word and the written Letter I shall any where seem to myself to find a discrepancy [sic], I will not conclude that such there actually is; ~~but~~ neither will I lie for God, nor on the other hand will I fall under the condemnation of them that would “lie for God”, but seek help as I may, and whence be thankful for what I have, and wait, ~~quietly~~” (SW&F 1121).

actual stated problems he had with the doctrine of plenary inspiration.<sup>529</sup> Looking at the arguments put forward against this doctrine in conjunction with Coleridge's own stated high regard for biblical authority, one sees a pattern developing where he believes that plenary inspiration actually *denigrates* biblical truth by stripping it of its capacity to act as a living and significant guide to the Christian life. A main purpose of Scripture is to provide a model for spiritual growth and maturity, and Coleridge repeatedly references the incredibly subjective, formative importance of Scripture. In one instance, he stated that compared with all other books, "the words of the Bible *find me* at greater depths of my Being; and that whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit" (SW&F 1123). Moreover, in proposing his purpose for writing *Confessions*, Coleridge, in two rhetorical questions, asks whether it is not better that "due appreciation of the Scriptures collectively be more safely relied on as the result and *consequence* of ~~such~~ the Belief in Christ" rather than insisting on "the Belief of the divine Origin and Authority of all and every part of the Canonical Books as the *Condition*, ~~and~~ or first principle, of Christian Faith" (SW&F 1116). Consequently, is it not better that the Bible, properly approached, offers "the gradual increase ~~of~~ in our spiritual discernment of their truth and authority" and "supplies a test and measure of our own growth and progress as individual Believers, ~~under~~ without the servile fear that prevents or overclouds the free honor that cometh from Love? (1 John. iv. 18)" (SW&F 1116).

If one looks at Coleridge's understanding of the function of Scripture in the Christian life, one sees a strong resemblance to the distinctive features of evangelical approaches to Scripture. As stated before, evangelicals saw Scripture as a, if not the, essential element in ordering their

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<sup>529</sup> In the introductory essay for *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* in the *Collected Works of Coleridge*, the editors point out that Coleridge likely, because he had a familiarity with critical German biblical scholarship to a much greater degree than most of his British contemporaries, wanted to develop an understanding of scriptural inspiration that preempted potential challenges posed by this scholarship.

lives. While many did hold to some form of inerrancy, including plenary inspiration, what distinguished evangelical readings and use of Scripture was not that they held to forms of biblical inerrancy.<sup>530</sup> Unlike other groups who held to plenary inspiration or the entire inerrancy of the Bible such as in Reformed Scholasticism<sup>531</sup>, evangelicals focused on the Bible's devotional function as a subjective means of grace. Scripture was not simply, or primarily, a repository of objectively true propositions, but a mirror, lens, and rule by which one could interpret one's growth in sanctification and judge the work of God when read under the Holy Spirit's guidance. Coleridge thus retains the distinctive features of evangelical readings of Scripture; what he did not retain was the undistinguishing understanding of the inspiration of Scripture held in common between many evangelicals and many non-evangelicals. Furthermore, in emphasizing the role of Scripture in guiding the believer *after* coming to faith and as a means of growing in faith, he was modeling a view of Scripture consonant with the lived experience of many evangelical Christians who had come to conviction of sin, repentance, and salvation through preaching or testimony rather than arguments relying upon the inerrancy of the Bible.

Furthermore, Coleridge did not simply have a view of biblical inspiration consistent with the distinctive features of the early evangelicals generally, but he actually had a view that specifically resembles that of the prominent Anglican Evangelical Charles Simeon.<sup>532</sup> As W.J.C. Irvine notes, Simeon held that without the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures

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<sup>530</sup> A more widely held evangelical acceptance that some form of inerrancy was *essential* to the Christian life did not come until later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>531</sup> The Protestant Scholastic approach saw inerrancy as a means of establishing certain inferences through syllogistic logic applied to sure factual propositions. Even if Coleridge shared with some liberal Christians a sense that every statement in Scripture did not have to be historically or scientifically true, he disagreed profoundly with the approach that used the Bible primarily as a repository of factual evidence for the truth or falsehood of Christianity. While differing on the nature of inspiration, liberals and Protestant Scholastics shared a common disposition toward scripture that contrasted with both Coleridge's and that of many evangelicals.

<sup>532</sup> Interestingly, Simeon also had a view of truth that strongly resembled Coleridge's polar logic.

“in themselves are like a sword sheathed and lying upon the ground: they are a dead letter: they convey no spiritual light: they impart no spiritual energy: they carry with them neither conviction, nor consolation: whether read or preached they are equally without effect.”<sup>533</sup> In understanding the nature of truth as conveyed in Scripture, Simeon believed that “no error in doctrine or other important matter is allowed; yet there are inexactness in reference to philosophical and scientific matters, because of its popular style.”<sup>534</sup> As to the purpose of interpreting scripture, Simeon held that everything in Scripture had to be read with a view to its “practical improvement,” or as to how it impacted Christian practice.<sup>535</sup>

One principle feature distinguishing Evangelicals from other Anglicans were the authorities that they appealed to for grounding their understanding of true Christianity and the real character of the Church of England. While Evangelicals were not unwilling to claim some form of moderate Calvinism, they were more likely to understand the Church of England’s theological identity as expressing a common Protestantism, i.e., those theological convictions commonly held by all the Reformers. Furthermore, they frequently considered their theological outlook broadly “Augustinian” as much, if not more, than they admitted to being “Calvinist.” Evangelicals tended to draw on early Elizabethan and Caroline divines such as Cranmer, Hooker, and Field as their theological exemplars, to view Puritan and early dissenting thinkers positively, and, as John Walsh pointed out, to see Archbishop Robert Leighton as especially authoritative.

On both of these points, Coleridge was of one mind with this Evangelical outlook. In his criticism of Sedgwick’s attack on Methodism, Coleridge likely during 1810 had already accepted

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<sup>533</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 116.

<sup>534</sup> Simeon, quoted in Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 119.

<sup>535</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 118.

for himself that the Church of England's "Church Liturgy + Articles + Homilies, Calvinism & Lutheranism are joined like the two Hands of the Union Fire Office" (CM IV 658). Furthermore, he grounded the thought of Luther and Calvin in "their great Guide, S<sup>t</sup> Augustine" (CM IV 644). Even at this time before Coleridge was acknowledging full conformity with the Church of England, he was still describing the Church in terms of a common Reformation, Augustinian heritage. As time went on, Coleridge came to accept this common Reformation heritage for himself. In *Aids to Reflection*, in describing his view of Divine Election, rather than positioning himself as holding a specifically Calvinist doctrine, he appeals to the broader Reformation consensus, stating that "the Doctrines of Calvin on Redemption and the natural state of fallen Man, fare in all essential points the same as those of Luther, Zuinglius, and the first Reformers collectively" and that this belief was also common to the "Protestant Divines at home [i.e., England]" (AR 162). In a note in this section, Coleridge again associates Augustinianism with this common Reformed theology, distinguishing between the "Augustinians, or Luther-Calvinistic Divines and the Grotians [i.e., Arminians]" (AR 163n). In a note on Leighton's commentary on 1 Peter referring to the same doctrine, Coleridge reiterates that it was "most unfairly entitled Calvinism" since it was held commonly by "Luther, Zuinglus, Calvin, Knox, Cranmer, and the other Fathers of the Reformation in England" (CM III 515). More thoroughly, in *Confessions*, Coleridge stated that he accepted "the ~~whole~~ Creed or System of Credenda ~~received and asserted~~ common to all the Fathers of the Reformation ~~unanimously before me,~~ (overlooking the differences between the several reformed Churches ~~overlooked,~~ as ~~indifferent~~ ~~or at least~~ non-essential)" (SW&F 1118).

Beyond his sentiments regarding the broader temper of his, and the Church of England's, theology, Coleridge highly regarded and drew upon the thinkers that one would expect from

evangelicals. Writing about his understanding of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Coleridge stated on June 14, 1830 that

I know of no Book – the Bible excepted as above all comparison – which I according to *my* judgement and experience could so safely recommend as teaching and enforcing the whole saving Truth according to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, as the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is, in *my* conviction, incomparably the best SUMMA THEOLOGICÆ *Evangelicæ* ever produced by Writer not miraculously inspired (CM I 802).

Furthermore, Coleridge greatly respected John Milton as a theologian as well as a poet. While he saw more needing correction in the thought of Richard Baxter, Coleridge still included him among “such excellent men as Baxter, Callamy, and the so-called Presbyterian or Puritan Divines” (CM II 651). Coleridge read and commented widely in Baxter's collected works even if he sometimes offered significant critiques of Baxter's theology and ecclesiology.<sup>536</sup> Baxter was also one of only two thinkers – the other being Luther – whom Coleridge continued to give equal emphasis as proposed figures for a spiritual autobiography in 1802 and again in 1803.<sup>537</sup>

Coleridge also held Puritanism as a broader movement in high esteem. In the *Lectures on Philosophy* while explaining that the propensity to believe in ghosts and other spectral apparitions was due to an inadequate understanding of human psychology in the period before the Restoration, Coleridge uses the Puritans to show the universality of such beliefs and that they were in no way confined to the superstitious, ignorant, or fanatical. Such stories could be found not only in “Luther and the divines of the English Church, but especially among the Puritans,” and that these accounts were “combined with so much political wisdom, so much ecclesiastical research, and so much genuine piety, that a man must be thoughtless indeed who could find a recurrence of such facts and not seek for their explanation” (PL 469).

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<sup>536</sup> For the extent of Coleridge's engagement with Baxter, see Coleridge's *Marginalia* I, 230-361. In addition to a copy of Baxter's *Catholick Theologie*, Coleridge owned and annotated two copies of the *Reliquiae Baxterianae*.

<sup>537</sup> John Beer, Editor's Introduction (AR xlii-xliii).

Coleridge also looked to the kinds of Church of England divines commonly esteemed by Anglican Evangelicals. He frequently compared the general Reformation outlook of Church of England thinkers prior to the English Civil War and Restoration with an Arminian and Grotian system of thought, which Coleridge saw as a “half-way between Popery and Socinianism,” that replaced it (CM III 652). Coleridge, in a title page-inscription to his son Derwent, recommended the work of Richard Field, a contemporary of Richard Hooker who worked with him to defend the legitimacy of the Anglican Church as Protestant. In this inscription, Coleridge proposed that “this one Volume [Field’s *Of the Church*] thoroughly understood and appropriated will place you in the highest rank of *doctrinal* Church of England Divines” and that in this work “here (more than in any of the Prelatical and Arminian Divines, from Laud to the death of Charles the Second) you will see the strength, and the beauty of the Church of England, i.e. its Liturgy, Homilies, and Articles” (CM II 651).

Coleridge’s engagement with and appropriation of the work of Robert Leighton deserves special treatment. To begin with, Coleridge praises Leighton even more than Bunyan, stating in his marginal notes on Leighton’s work that “surely if ever Work not in the sacred Canon might suggest a belief of Inspiration, of something more than human, this is it” (CM III 508). Leighton proved so significant for Coleridge that the most extensive published work expounding his theological views, the *Aids to Reflection*, grew out of his originally intended collection of excerpts from Leighton for a certain “Beauties of Leighton.”<sup>538</sup> While transforming into *Aids to Reflection*, which included substantial commentary from Coleridge and aphorisms from a few other thinkers such as Jeremy Taylor, this work ultimately retained its original aphoristic structure and was still composed around a core body of quotations from Leighton. Coleridge was

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<sup>538</sup> Beer, Editor’s Introduction (AR lv).

certainly not simply parroting the Archbishop, but it would also be a mistake not to see Leighton as a, if not *the*, centrally significant theological influence on Coleridge.

Robert Leighton provides evidence that Coleridge was within the orbit of Anglican Evangelicalism for reasons beyond Coleridge's having used him to express his theology and the esteem in which he held him. Coleridge's first exposure to Leighton came to him when he was loaned a copy of Leighton's works by a certain William Brame Elwyn during the profound spiritual crisis Coleridge experienced from late 1813 until early 1814.<sup>539</sup> Coleridge found that reading Leighton gave him hope and helped him persevere through his physical and spiritual pain.<sup>540</sup> Coleridge engaged in regular and extended conversations about Leighton, some of which occurred between Coleridge and acknowledged Evangelicals. Coleridge's interactions with both Thomas Methuen and Hannah More have already been pointed out, but it is important to indicate that part of what lead these thinkers to appreciate Coleridge's religious outlook was his extensive, and in their estimation correct, familiarity with Leighton. Thomas Methuen recalled from 1814-16 the way in which Coleridge exhibited "... familiarity with Leighton and kindred religious authors" and that "from the rich, and spiritually speaking, jeweled pages of Leighton, he would repeat ample passages."<sup>541</sup> Hannah More stated that in addition to Coleridge having shown "considerable acquaintance" with Evangelicalism, it pleased her to learn that Coleridge "had stayed up till 4 that morning reading ArchBp Leighton which Mr. Elwin [sic] whose favorite Author he is become, lent him!" (CM III 507). Coleridge was not only acquainting

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<sup>539</sup> Beer, Editor's Introduction (AR xlv-xlvi).

<sup>540</sup> Beer, Editor's Introduction (AR xlvi-xlvii).

<sup>541</sup> *C Talker* 304, 310, quoted in Beer, Editor's Introduction (AR xlvii).



himself with a luminary author for Anglican Evangelicals; he was forming his opinions about Leighton in conversation *with* Evangelicals.

Coleridge shared with the larger evangelical movement the same (religious) opponents. Evangelicals squared off against the explicitly “rationalist” religious movements such as Deism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism. It hardly seems necessary to point out here that Coleridge opposed Unitarianism and Socinianism; numerous passages already quoted have pointed to this fact. Coleridge did not even see these movements as rising to the status of deformed versions of Christianity, saying in the *Biographia Literaria* that “if the Doctrines, the sum of which I *believe* to constitute the Truth in Christ, *be* Christianity, then Unitarianism is not, and vice versa” (BL 246). Speaking to Socinianism as a theological system, Coleridge told his brother-in-law George Fricker in 1806 that “I read the New Testament again [after increasing misgivings about Unitarianism], and I became fully convinced, that Socinianism was not only not the doctrine of the New Testament, but that it scarcely deserved the name of a religion in any sense” (CL II 1189).

However, Coleridge spent much more space arguing against those claims to Christian belief and practice that emphasized an external scheme of rules without requiring the practitioner to move beyond self-interested motives. In this opposition Coleridge stands with the evangelical challenge to what they saw as the predominant claimant to “Christianity” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Namely, they challenged the dominant theological system, whether put forward by academic theologians (such as Paley) or preached and believed, that proposed a kind of utilitarian ethics whereby Christianity ensured the following of the moral law by holding out the reward of heaven and the punishment of hell. 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers generally had a sense that Christianity added something that would not be possible without revealed religion, whether that was the revelation

of further moral laws or the possibility of the grace of forgiveness to address the weakness of our nature preventing perfect obedience to this law. In any case, even with the more orthodox Latitudinarians who held to all human actions requiring divine assistance, this belief in Christianity as support for following the moral law almost universally involved the sense that salvation (or justification) was contingent upon moral behavior accomplished in some way through inherent human capacities. In challenging this scheme, there were really two separate critiques that evangelicals leveled, viz., the critique of reducing Christianity to *mere* self-interested morality and the challenge to salvation through works.

Looking again to Wesley and Wilberforce, one sees a strong rejection of this “self-interested” Christianity. John Wesley asserted that there is not only the division between the “almost Christian” and the “Christian altogether,” but between both of these and those with the outward signs of Christianity but who work wholly from self-interest. In all three of these cases there is no significant difference in outward behavior: All three classes of people speak honestly, seek to follow the dictates of justice, avoid excess, actively do good, and pray, worship, and make use of the means of grace regularly.<sup>542</sup> The *motivation* from which these actions flow distinguishes these three categories. Wesley importantly sees those who do these things in such a way as to never rise above self-interest as not only not even almost Christian, but not even rising to the level of *heathen morality*. To this class of people, Wesley applies the quote, “Oderunt peccare boni, virtutis amore;/ Oderunt peccare mali, formidine pnae [Good people hate sinning (doing bad) out of a love of virtue; evil people hate sinning (doing bad) from dread of punishment].”<sup>543</sup> You do not even rise to being *almost* Christian (and thus not thoroughly wicked

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<sup>542</sup> John Wesley, Sermon 2, “The Almost Christian,” §1-8, in *Works*, 1:131-4.

<sup>543</sup> Wesley, “Almost Christian,” §9, in *Works*, 1:134-5.

in intention) unless you also do all these things from a sincere and “real design to serve God.”<sup>544</sup> Being a “Christian altogether” involves doing all of these things out of a true love of God “as engrosses the whole heart, as rakes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties.”<sup>545</sup> Similarly, William Wilberforce, in describing the way in which real Christianity has been replaced with a system whereby “a man admit in general terms the truth of Christianity, though he know not or consider much the particulars of the system; and if he be not habitually guilty of any of the grosser vices against his fellow creatures, we have no great reason to be dissatisfied with him, or to question the validity of the name and consequent privileges of a Christian.”<sup>546</sup> This false system of Christianity removes “the generous wakeful spirit of Christian benevolence” and instead “a system of *decent selfishness* is avowedly established in its stead.”<sup>547</sup>

In a way that echoes this evangelical sentiment, Coleridge fully rejects the notion of “schemes of conduct, grounded on calculation of Self-interest; or on the average Consequences of Actions” being used as a system of “Moral Science” (AR 293). While such systems may be important and justified as a “branch of Political Economy,” when they are referred to the higher sphere of morality “they are in all cases *foreign*, and when substituted for it, *hostile*” (AR 293). True morality, that is, a system that secures truly moral (good) action, “springs out of the ‘perfect Law of Freedom,’ which exists only by its unity with the Will of God, its inherence in the Word of God, and its communion with the Spirit of God” (AR 294). The goodness or badness of actions do not originate, with regard to the individual agent, in whether the effects of the actions

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<sup>544</sup> Wesley, “Almost Christian,” §10, in *Works*, 1:136

<sup>545</sup> Wesley, “Almost Christian,” §(I).1, in *Works*, 1:137

<sup>546</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, IV.1.

<sup>547</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, IV.2

are “constructive, destructive or neutral,” but in the originating will. Any act that truly comes from a will subordinated to the Will of God is good, while any that “proceeds from a false centre in the Agent’s particular Will, is EVIL,” and it seems here that actions that arise from self-interest are just such actions (AR 294). One can see that Coleridge has Paley’s system of self-interested morality squarely in his sights from the title of the aphorism from which this argument is taken, viz., “APHORISM XII: PALEY NOT A MORALIST” (AR 293).<sup>548</sup>

While Coleridge, Wesley, and Wilberforce reject moral schema that fail to transcend self-interest as the source of activity, none of them believed that Christianity should fully exclude self-interest. John Wesley understood that in the true Christian all actions and affections would flow from love of God, but this was not meant to exclude regard for one’s wellbeing. Even though love of neighbor or “social love” was to be distinguished as “absolutely, essentially different from self-love,” there is still a self-love “of the most allowable kind.”<sup>549</sup> Additionally, Wesley allowed for there to be a special regard for “relations, friend and benefactors” and “a fervent love of [the Christian’s] country” even within the love of neighbor “not confined to one sect or party, not restrained to those who agree with him in opinions, or in outward modes of worship, or to those who are allied to him by blood or recommended by nearness of place.”<sup>550</sup> Using more Augustinian language about the proper subordination of various intramundane concerns, Wilberforce also puts forward a view of proper Christian love that does not eliminate self-regard even as it does not let it be the motivating (or primary motivating) force:

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<sup>548</sup> Coleridge also challenges eudemonistic systems that move the reward or punishment for good and bad behavior from heaven and hell to the happiness that is the natural result of good behavior. Coleridge affirms that it is true and indeed a good that the life of virtue will bring with it many inner and outer advantages, but it is impossible to turn these consequences of virtue into “our proper and primary *motives* for such acts and determinations, without destroying or entirely altering the distinct nature and character of the latter” (AR 52-3).

<sup>549</sup> Wesley, *A Plain Account*, I.6.

<sup>550</sup> Wesley, *A Plain Account*, I.5.

It is not merely however the fear of misery, and the desire of happiness, by which [real Christians] are actuated in their endeavors to excel in all holiness; they love it for its own sake, nor is it *solely* by the sense of self-interest (this though often unreasonably condemned, is but it must be confessed of a principle of an inferior order) that they are influenced in their determination to obey the will, and to cultivate the favour of God.<sup>551</sup>

It is not that the proper love of God eliminates other concerns, but rather affections should be so ordered that they are “supremely fixed on God,” and that this fixation be “*the leading and governing desire and primary pursuit*” of everything else that we do and desire.<sup>552</sup>

Coleridge shares this sense of the way in which this higher principle should control the lower without eliminating self-interest; he is likewise not opposed to self-interest *per se*, but only to self-interest that does not lead to its self-transcendence. There is a prudence “that stands in opposition to a higher moral life, and tends to preclude it,” and this is an “EVIL PRUDENCE.” However, there is also a neutral kind of prudence, “not incompatible with spiritual growth,” and finally a prudence that “co-exists with morality, as morality co-exists with the spiritual life: a prudence that is the organ of both, as the understanding is to the reason and the will, or as the lungs are to the heart and the brain” (AR 38-9). Here is Coleridge’s description of his more Augustinian understanding of the love of God as that which should properly order the will. This seems to be the principle behind Coleridge’s affirmation that the ascending scale of the various forms of faith, leading to the truest sense of faith as fidelity to God, do not at higher levels necessarily completely subsume or replace the lower. Instead, each lower level is only harmful and in need of correction when it attempts to supersede the demands of the higher (SW&F 844).

However, Coleridge not only puts forward this as it were *synchronic* view of proper prudence or self-interest, but also a means whereby self-interest can serve a *diachronic* or developmental purpose for the Christian. While this is of an inferior order to the prudence that

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<sup>551</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, IV.1.

<sup>552</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, IV.2.

coexists with a proper Love of God as its analogous organ, it is still of a high value for growth into spiritual maturity. Coleridge refers to this as a “faithful, a WISE PRUDENCE, having, indeed its birth-place in the world, and the *wisdom of this world* for its father; but naturalized in a better land, and having the wisdom from above for its Sponsor and Spiritual Parent” (AR 38-9). Coleridge provides in a September 1829 notebook entry an abbreviated way in which this development progresses according to what are the practical means for fostering each level of spiritual development. It will be more helpful to simply list the entry in its totality:

1. To <gross> Sinners.—by the plain light of Common Sense & of natural Conscience, supposing only the belief of a Holy God & a ~~Spirit~~ Soul that survives the dissolution of the Body to show the terrific lot that cannot but await the Persons who are in habits of committing crimes—specifying the crimes, & proving by the effects in this life what their consequences must be, in a state where there is no Hope — —To such men the Law must be sheen in its terrors—& Faith in Christ offered as *a rescue from Perdition*.
2. When the mind is awakened, and turns toward Christ, then to prevent the fearful mistake that a forsaking of these gross vices so produced will suffice, to preach the Law in it’s [sic] *Holiness*—to show *what* is demanded of us, and it is *does* demand all this of us.—“I hope, I am pretty tolerably good for a man”—as a ~~Pers~~ Horse is as good as can be expected of a Horse of this Sort.—This is the delusion which must be rooted out God knows that we are poor and imperfect & erring creatures—Yes! God does know this, and to a far more fearful extent than we know it of ourselves; but God likewise knows, that this imperfection, i.e. these Sins and sinful weaknesses, are the effects and consequences of our own Guilt—But what wonder if the doctrine of ~~Faith~~ Gospel should be resisted by those, who either deny or explain away the foundation of our need of his Gospel, the Article of *original Sin*—of a Sin, not arising out of our circumstances, but having it’s origin in ourselves, and of which these circumstances, are far rather the result.—When the demands of the Law on the spiritual Man are set forth, then to compare our best works, as done without Faith, with these demands—and then to preach Faith as the ground of Hope, the hope of everlasting Life in and thro’ the righteousness of Christ.
3. Lastly, & to such minds to preach Faith a unto Sanctification—(as in the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the third lead, counting backwards—)—Faith alone can save us, because Faith never is nor can be *alone*. —And this presence is communicated to an individual Soul must needs appear & act as a *Seed*. This manifestation of Infinites in the Finite is a most fertile & ferocious Truth — Think only of the infinite power of Vegetable Life in the first Acorn —the formative *power* must be conceived in that, as all in *one*—(So the infinitude of the Son of God in Christ/ = the fullness of the Godhead bodily)—But now the same powers must be conceived as *one in all*. But the manifestation of both must be a *Seed* (CN V 6086).

Coleridge conceives of a movement whereby self-interest, by means of fear of one’s eternal punishment and the hope of reward and salvation from punishment can give way to the life of what can become good deeds if they come to flow from an inner principle of true Faith.

The other half of the evangelical critique of popular Christianity was the vigorous rejection of any Christianity that made salvation, justification, or repentance contingent upon some good works. Wesley stated that while “the Deists, Arians, or Socinians” are certainly to be

considered enemies of true Christianity, he saw them as too obviously opposed to true Christianity to be worthy of comment. Those “who are accounted the pillars of our Church, and champions of our faith” but who “betray the Church, and sap the very foundation of the faith we are taught thereby” were the greater threats to true Christianity.<sup>553</sup> Referring specifically to Tillotson, but speaking about a broader sentiment put forward by “men of renown,” Wesley pointed to their attempt to demonstrate that “not faith alone, but good works also, are necessary in order to justification,” which has the effect of sapping “the very foundation of our Church, by attacking its fundamental d[octrine], and, indeed, the fundamental [doctrine] of all Reformed Churches, viz., the doctrine of justification by faith alone.”<sup>554</sup>

Wilberforce provided as much, if not more, of a challenge to this loss of the “fundamental doctrine of all Reformed Churches.” Wilberforce does not give a single summary like Wesley of the challenge to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but that is only because he instead critiques at length the component parts that constitute such a rejection. First, he challenges the “bulk of professed Christians” who are “used to speaking of man as a being, who naturally pure, and inclined to all virtue, is sometimes, almost involuntarily, drawn out of the right course, or is overpowered by the violence of temptation.”<sup>555</sup> Wilberforce directly contrasts this conception of humanity to the properly Christian understanding that “man is an apostate creature, fallen from high from his original, degraded in his nature, and depraved in his faculties, indisposed to good, and disposed to evil.”<sup>556</sup> Rather than seeing Christ’s death as the

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<sup>553</sup> John Wesley, Sermon 150, “Hypocrisy in Oxford,” §3, in *Works*, 4:395.

<sup>554</sup> Wesley, “Hypocrisy in Oxford” §5, in *Works*, 4:395.

<sup>555</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, II.1.

<sup>556</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, II.1. For Wilberforce, like Coleridge, one can gather this assessment about human depravity not only from scriptural reflection, but also through attention to the incongruity between the seeming exalted nature of human faculties and our actual vicious existence, both as seen in (Wilberforce’s) contemporary

only means of effecting the forgiveness of sins and occasioning the restoring power of the Holy Spirit, these nominal Christians “really rest their eternal hopes on a vague, general persuasion of the unqualified mercy of the Supreme Being” or, “still more erroneously, they rely, in the main, on their own negative or positive merits.”<sup>557</sup> Nominal Christians do not recognize there are “many shades of difference between those who flatly renounce, and those who cordially embrace the doctrine of Redemption by Christ.”<sup>558</sup> Because nominal Christians do not explicitly reject Christ’s redemptive work by believing that Christ’s death effected a “new dispensation, wherein [these Christians] will be tried by a more lenient rule than to that by which they would otherwise have been subject,” they mistakenly believe that they are accepting an appropriately Reformation doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>559</sup>

Coleridge also spends considerable space arguing against what he saw as variously “Arminian,” “Grotian,” or “Paleo-Grotian”<sup>560</sup> systems of thought within Christianity, almost always putting these systems of thought in a kind of middle position between orthodox Protestantism and Socinianism. In an exposition of the Arminianism of Jeremy Taylor (which he does tie to that of Laud and one may assume to 18<sup>th</sup> century Arminians), Coleridge explicitly claims that the problem of this way of thinking is that in it “man is to do every thing” and that it

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world and throughout all of history. Thus, like Coleridge, Wilberforce puts the burden of proof on those who deny human depravity rather than on the traditional reformed understanding of the doctrine.

<sup>557</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, III.4.

<sup>558</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, III.4.

<sup>559</sup> Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, III.4.

<sup>560</sup> Coleridge understood Paley as one of the primary intellectual proponents in his day of this “Arminianism” that was actually the even more denigrated “Grotianism,” as indicated in an 1806 letter to George Fricker in which he stated that Paley, in employing his evidences, was rehashing “a mode of defending Christianity, adopted by Grotius first, and latterly, among many others, by Dr. Paley” (CL II 1189). A shorter, but more explicit identification of Paley’s and Grotius’s teaching is found in one of Coleridge’s marginal notes on Lessing, where he speaks of “a more sturdy Anti-Grotin—hodiernâ linguâ, Anti-Paleyian [in today’s language]” (CM V 666).



is “bonâ fide Pelagianism” that “reduces the cross of Christ to nothing” (CM V 589, 596). That he saw this as descriptive not only of Taylor, but in his day of all (or the majority) of Church of England clergy who were not Evangelicals, is indicated in his letter regarding the creed of Methuen, where the “sober” non-Evangelical clergy were of the “Religio Grotiana [Grotian Religion],” which went farther toward a semi-Roman Catholicism and semi-Socinianism than even the thought of Arminius, who himself deviated from the common teachings of all other Reformers (CL IV 567-8). With Arminianism and its victory over Calvinism in the “higher orders of Christians” came “a finer form of the old doctrine of meritorious works” (CN IV 5385).

It is now appropriate to turn to Coleridge’s understanding and practice of piety, both personal and corporate. It is in the practice of piety that Anglican Evangelicals (*particularly moderates*) most represented a distinct modulation of the larger evangelical movement. If one can speak of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelical piety as consisting of an emphasis on preaching and hymn singing in worship, intense devotional study of the Bible, and the importance of prayer and introspection, then Evangelicals, especially moderates, were characterized by a more reserved approach to these things and a greater regard for formal liturgical and ecclesial structures.

Returning to Walsh’s contrast between the Anglican Evangelicals and their dissenting (primarily Wesleyan Methodist) counterparts, one sees an overriding attempt to temper or moderate the excesses (perceived and, in certain cases, real) of “irregular” or “enthusiastic” evangelical practices. In opposition to any expectation of extraordinary manifestations and revelations of the Spirit, Evangelicals largely confined the work of the Spirit to the “regular, constituted ‘means of grace;’ private prayer, public worship, the sacraments, above all the study

of the Bible.”<sup>561</sup> Evangelical clergy avoided the “unruly immediatism of popular piety,” particularly the “fraternal, egalitarian pietism of Methodists” which “stood for a simple receptivity to divine influence, an expectant openness which anticipated personal encounters with God not only within the prescribed ‘means of grace,’ but outside them as well; at any hour, in any place, however incongruous.”<sup>562</sup> In some instances this increased emphasis on regularity and proper institutional mediation only affected the venue and not the form of piety. While Anglican Evangelicals could be averse to the itinerancy, field-preaching, and use of lay preachers of the Methodist Revival, they remained committed to the importance of a particular form of preaching. “All the Evangelicals were convinced of the primacy of preaching,” says Horton Davies in his study of worship in modern and contemporary England.<sup>563</sup> Like the strong emotionalism and even theatricality of Whitfield, Evangelicals came to be known for “passionately sincere preaching that evinced a true love for souls,” even if they returned to manuscript preaching rather than extemporaneity when “preaching without notes came to be identified with Methodism.”<sup>564</sup> Similarly, Evangelicals emphasized theological themes – above all the cross of Christ – “in contrast to the moral preaching of Tillotson.”<sup>565</sup>

As early as 1810, Coleridge was rejecting moralistic preaching in favor of doctrinal sermons, specifically those sermons labeled “Methodist.” Coleridge stated that “never were either Ministers or Congregations so strict in all morality as at the hour when nothing but fine

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<sup>561</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 97.

<sup>562</sup> Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 98.

<sup>563</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, vol. II: From Watts and Wesley to Martineau, 1690-1900* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 1.227.

<sup>564</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology, II*, 1.231.

<sup>565</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology, II*, 1.227.

*moral* discourses (i.e. calculations on Self-love) would have driven a Preacher from the Pulpit— & when the Clergy thought it their duty, to preach Christ & him crucified” (CN III 3790). More telling, however, than Coleridge’s individual statements or reflections regarding his attitude toward Evangelical preaching was his relationship with Edward Irving, an extremely charismatic minister in the Church of Scotland whose own exceptionally theatrical and emotional preaching style came about in part from his relationship with Coleridge. Irving reported that Coleridge proved “more profitable to my faith in orthodox doctrine, to my spiritual understanding of the Word of God...than any or all of the men with whom I have entertained friendship and conversation...”.<sup>566</sup> Bebbington places Irving not only as one of evangelicalism’s most important early 19<sup>th</sup> century orators, but also one of the main figures propagating the ideas that shifted the movement away from moderate Evangelicalism, including millenarianism, an emphasis on prophecy and “supernaturalism,” and a stricter biblical literalism.<sup>567</sup>

Coleridge certainly respected Irving’s gifts as a speaker, calling him “the greatest *Orator*” he had ever heard (CL V 286). Indeed, Coleridge took a special interest in seeking out opportunities to hear Irving preach while he was living at Highgate. While Coleridge was thinking extensively about Christian theology in the early 1820s (but before making his return to full communion with the Church of England), he still did not attend services regularly. Even then Coleridge made an exception for Irving, whom “Gillman drove him to hear preach at the Scotch

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<sup>566</sup> Edward Irving, *Missionaries*, vii. f., quoted in Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 80. Bebbington correctly points out the relationship between Irving and Coleridge, and I believe him right to draw attention to the general relationship between the development of Romanticism and evangelicalism; he is I believe mistaken in *how* he presents this relationship. He makes it seem as though Irving was drawn to and influenced only by Coleridge as a *Romantic* poet, not even looking to Irving’s own statement about Coleridge teaching him orthodoxy. That Coleridge and Irving eventually parted ways over Irving’s turn toward a radical kind of prophetic inspiration and the other elements of his thought that further located him on the fringes of the evangelical movement points all that much more toward Coleridge having landed among the moderate Evangelicals.

<sup>567</sup> Cf. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 78-91.

Chapel in Hatton Garden in 1823.”<sup>568</sup> However, Coleridge’s respect for Irving did not stop with his oratorical skill. He commented extensively on Irving’s published works<sup>569</sup> and gave Irving “unfeigned and earnest respect” (CM III 26). This respect extended to a description of Irving in *Aids to Reflection* as “a mighty Wrestler in the cause of Spiritual Religion and *Gospel* morality, in whom more than in any other Contemporary I have seen the spirit of LUTHER revived” (AR 378n). Coleridge’s respect for the religious content of his preaching may indicate that he appreciated preaching that was more emotionally vivid than even moderate Evangelicals normally provided. At the very least, it shows that Coleridge was not averse to Evangelical modes of preaching and gave the hearing of sermons an important place in his life even when he was not regularly attending other services. Such an inference is strengthened by Coleridge’s understanding of Irving as a gifted speaker and as a great spiritual example. It would seem strange that Coleridge would approve both of Irving’s method of delivery and (for the most part) the content of his preaching and yet disapprove of such preaching more generally.

In other ways, the appreciation for a more “orderly” evangelicalism meant that distinctive (for the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century) evangelical practices of piety were tempered by the desire to conform to proper forms of worship as prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer. Unlike early Methodist services of extemporaneous prayer, preaching, testimony, and hymn singing, which formed the basis of Methodist public worship when they became their own church, Anglican Evangelicals did not seek separate forms of public worship; rather they sought ways to incorporate these distinctive emphases into proper public Prayer Book worship or into parallel

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<sup>568</sup> John Beer, “Coleridge at Highgate,” *Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 19, no. 39 (Spring 2002): 30-40.

<sup>569</sup> Coleridge at times made significantly critical comments, as for instance when he stated, “Truly & sincerely, I had not deemed it *possible* that I could have read the assertions and positions contained in this discourse from p xxix to p xliv in a work of Mr Irvings! The glaring Tritheism—what do I say?—the glaring Tri-angelism” (CM III 42).

private devotion. Evangelicals did follow the Wesleyan and Calvinist Methodists in publishing their own hymn books, and they had their own hymn writers, but their distinctive contribution was on emphasizing the “introduction of hymnody into Anglican services,” and in so doing they “enabled the people to take a larger part in worship than had hitherto been their right.”<sup>570</sup> This was in contrast to the standard (non-Evangelical) Anglican practice, in part sustained by association between Methodist “Enthusiasm” and hymn-singing, of avoiding congregational singing. As recorded in *The Early Evangelicals*, there were certainly many in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Church of England who opposed hymn singing on the grounds that “all ancient hymns were Popish and all modern hymns are Puritan.”<sup>571</sup> Davies states, “In the first three decades of the nineteenth century the standard of congregational praise was deplorable,” with some congregations not even standing for it.<sup>572</sup> Emblematic of this larger attitude, Davies points to Berridge’s *Preface* to the *Collection of Divine Songs*, where he states that “Psalm-singing is become a vulgar business in our churches. The tax of praise is collected from a solitary clerk of some bawling voices in a singing loft: the congregation may listen if they please or talk in whispers or take a gentle nap.”<sup>573</sup>

On the point of the use not only of music, but of hymnody, Coleridge advanced a view of congregational song that saw the importance both of hymnody and of fuller congregational participation through music in worship. In an entry from his *Table Talk* from May 30, 1830, Coleridge stated:

Is it not most extraordinary that the Church of England should so utterly disregard congregational singing! that in that particular part of the public worship in which, more than in all the rest, the common people

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<sup>570</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology*, II, 1.234, 1.235-6.

<sup>571</sup> Abbey and Overton, ii, 51, quoted in Elliott-Binns, *Early Evangelicals*, 374.

<sup>572</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology*, II, 234.

<sup>573</sup> Berridge, quoted in *Worship and Theology II*, 1.234.

might and ought to join-which by its association with music is meant to give a fitting vent and expression to the Emotions-that in this part, I say-we should all sing as Jews! In Germany, the hymns are known by heart by every peasant; they advise, they argue from the hymns, and every soul in the church praises God like a Christian with words which are natural and yet sacred to his mind! (TT I 150).

That Coleridge was not simply speaking about singing metrical Psalms can be gathered first from the original sentence that was prefaced to the 1835 edition of this entry in the *Table Talk*, where Coleridge states that “Luther did as much for the Reformation by his hymns as by his translation of the Bible” (TT I 150n6). Coleridge expressed that *hymns* were specifically important for Christian worship when he stated that “you know my veneration for the Book of Psalms, or most of it; but with some half dozen exceptions, the Psalms are surely not adequate vehicles of Christian thanksgiving and joy! Upon this deficiency in our service, Wesley and Whitfield seized; and you know it is the hearty congregational singing of Christian hymns which keeps the humbler Methodists together” (TT II 103-4).

The desire to preserve the orderliness of Prayer Book worship led to one of the main distinguishing features of Anglican Evangelicalism: the importance of different approaches to public and private prayer, as well as an emphasis on family prayer and devotion. “The Anglican Evangelicals may be said to have hit on the happy notion of requiring the Liturgy in public prayers and extemporary devotions in informal gatherings, such as family prayers.”<sup>574</sup> Family devotions took a distinctive form among Anglican Evangelicals; its form and depth as it arose in the thought and practice of “such men as Wilberforce and Shaftesbury is revealed by their diaries: they show how highly they regarded periods of prayer, Bible-reading and meditation.”<sup>575</sup> While this family and individual prayer was often extemporaneous or not directly taken from the Book of Common Prayer, one can still see the influence of the general structure of Anglican

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<sup>574</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology, II*, I.217

<sup>575</sup> Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals*, 105.

devotion in Evangelical practices. Echoing the structure of morning and evening prayer in the Prayer Book, family prayer occurred “most frequently at breakfast or in the evening, or both, often with the servants present.”<sup>576</sup> Evangelicals rejected any mere formalism or unthinking (or better unfeeling) ritualistic recitation of the liturgy or prayers, but their use of extemporaneous prayers in the home did not come out of a sense of the inadequacy of the structured liturgy. Evangelicals may have thought that one needed to truly pray and not only say the words of the Prayer Book in the liturgy and at home, but they did not share the Presbyterian feeling at the Savoy Conference that using only established forms of prayer in public worship “is not enough to warm the heart aright; and cold prayers are likely to have a cold return.”<sup>577</sup> Instead, Evangelicals held the Prayer Book in the highest regard as the formula for public worship and the plan for private devotion. The leading members of the first generation of Anglican Evangelicals “were assiduous in their reading of the Book of Common Prayer,” and the second generation was “even more enthusiastic in its admiration for the Prayer Book.”<sup>578</sup>

Evangelicals linked this emphasis on individual and family prayer to a larger conception of personal, prayerful devotion. Periods of prayer and meditation occurred in conjunction with serious and attentive Bible study and devotional reading. While the Anglican Evangelicals may not have insisted on the same need for extemporaneity in all forms of worship to cultivate proper religious dispositions, they held in common with the larger evangelical movement the need for searching introspection in the life of prayer. Just as Wesley encouraged rigorous self-examination and prescribed various methods for engaging in this activity, such as journaling,

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<sup>576</sup> Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals*, 106.

<sup>577</sup> Quoted in Jacobs, *The Book of Common Prayer, A Biography*, 88.

<sup>578</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology, II*, I.217.

meditating on scripture, etc., John Newton also developed regularly appointed spiritual exercises and devotions “used chiefly as a means of disciplined self-examination and a way of focusing his religious affections.”<sup>579</sup> Evangelicals generally used this time to seek out the marks of growth in sanctification; in it evangelicals acted “with a view to discovering the marks of a real change made by the Spirit of God.”<sup>580</sup>

Anglican Evangelical piety emphasized public and private prayer, the study of and meditation on scripture as a vital part of personal devotion, and an expectation of self-examination and introspection, all of which Coleridge explicitly prescribed, engaged in, or both. Robert Barth has shown Coleridge’s general sense of the importance of prayer to the Christian life, and his summary shows a view consonant with that of Evangelicals. Coleridge gave prayer great prominence within the Christian life, seeing it, along with the sacraments, as one of the “means of sanctification.”<sup>581</sup> For Coleridge, prayer was “an act of both God and of man” whereby the person is given clarity as to whether appropriate means for accomplishing union with God have been chosen.<sup>582</sup> In line with the Evangelical sense that prayer required true feeling and could never be equated with mere words, Coleridge stated that “Prayer *is Faith* passing into act – a union of the will and the Intellect realizing in an *intellectual* act. It is the *whole* man that prays; less than this is wishing, or *lip* work, a Cham, or a mummery” (CM I 702). An anecdote reported by his son between Coleridge and his nephew indicates that Coleridge personally became highly emotional in his prayers. Coleridge, in speaking to his nephew, said, “Believe me,

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<sup>579</sup> Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 222.

<sup>580</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 46.

<sup>581</sup> Barth, *Christian Doctrine*, 182.

<sup>582</sup> Barth, *Christian Doctrine*, 183-4.



to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice through Christ, and verily do the thing he pleaseth thereupon – this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian’s warfare upon earth. Teach us to pray, Lord!” After saying this, Coleridge “burst into a flood of tears, and begged me [Henry] to pray for him” (TT II 103n).

Coleridge drew distinctions between public and private prayer in much the same way that Evangelicals did. In 1810, Coleridge was saying that the problem with the Methodists was that by collapsing both forms into each other, they lose “the most heart-elevating part of a Christian’s Duty,” which is “that in which he loses for a while his individual and dividuous Self, and partakes of the Joys, Sorrows, Hopes, and Exultations of Christ’s ~~ma~~ espoused Church.” The Church of England’s advantage is that “the Language of our noble Liturgy is such as applies to all men, which all men alike may & ought to utter from their inmost hearts” (CN III 4021). One thus sees Coleridge already distinguishing between public and private forms of prayer and extolling the virtues of the liturgy as found in the Book of Common Prayer. He would continue to hold to the excellency of the Book of Common Prayer for public forms of worship till the end of his life. Among his statements in *Table Talk*, Coleridge said on October 5, 1830 that “I never felt the heavenly superiority of the prayers of the English Liturgy, till I had attended some Kirks in the country parts of Scotland” (TT I 210). Interestingly, this statement echoes almost exactly not only the sentiment but also the circumstances of one by Charles Simeon, who said after a visit to Scotland that “I have on my return to the use of our Liturgy... felt it an inestimable privilege that we possess a form of sound words, so adapted in every respect to the wants and desires of all who would worship God in spirit and truth.”<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>583</sup> Quoted in Davies, *Worship and Theology, II*, I.218.

For all his respect for the form of public worship, Coleridge did not lack an appreciation of the importance of family and private prayers. Again looking to his *Table Talk*, Coleridge indicated on May 30, 1830 that “there are three sorts of Prayer – Public – Domestic –Solitary. Each has its peculiar uses and character” (TT I 152). That Coleridge was deeply invested in his personal prayer life is made clear by his composition of his own forms of morning and evening prayers, as well as at least one “Prayer to Be Said Before a Man Begins his Work.”<sup>584</sup> Furthermore, whatever forms of prayer Coleridge may have read or composed, he also used extemporaneity in his personal devotional life. In a letter to Edward Coleridge, he stated that “my Prayers had been too little formal, too exclusively meditative, too much of thought and feeling, and too little of Will and Striving after furtherance in grace” (CL VI 555-556). This statement indicates that Coleridge employed not only various forms, but also attitudes and methods in his prayer, all of which would indicate that he was not simply repeating words from the Daily Office. An even clearer indication comes from another letter in which Coleridge both strongly alludes to extemporaneous elements as part of his daily prayer and also indicates three other elements frequently found in Evangelical personal prayer habits, viz., morning and evening times of prayer, the use of Scripture<sup>585</sup>, and introspection:

Before I pass to worldly concerns of all the supplemental means of comfort and of growth that it has been given me to employ, the most fruitful has been the habit of making some one chapter of the Psalms or the Prophets, or St John's Gospel, or of St Paul's Epistles a regular part of my morning and my last prayers. This interposition of meditation, together with the act of self-examination in determining the appropriability of the several verses that either might form or suggest prayer or thanksgiving and previous

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<sup>584</sup> All three of these prayers are contained in the *Shorter Works and Fragments* with the form for nightly prayer on 1486-8 and the other two prayers on 1512-14,

<sup>585</sup> One has already seen that Coleridge saw Scripture as an important element in Christian prayer and devotion in that he shared with the Evangelicals the sense that only close contact with Scripture allowed one to discern the working of the Spirit in one's life. Additionally, Coleridge's view of Scripture as a vehicle whereby the Spirit could find him and speak to him further points to a strongly devotional relationship that he had with the Bible. The letter above simply indicates that Coleridge indeed practiced what he preached. Also telling is the increasing prominence that his thoughts on Scripture came to play in his later notebook entries. From sometime in July or August of 1827 until at least the summer of 1833, Coleridge took to commenting on specific chapters of the Bible, with this being the single focus of his entries for days on end at times during this period.

to the appropriation, I have found most favorable to a devotional state — and among other advantages prevents those transient wanderings of the mind and transfers of the conscious attention from the Great Being addressed to the words and thoughts themselves & which the sound of one's own voice will at times occasion (CL V 725-6).

Finally, one cannot describe Coleridge's personal piety without giving due space to introspection. This could hardly be more obvious than that Coleridge's only published work expositing his theology at length, *Aids to Reflection*, was by Coleridge's own admission written for "as many in all classes as wish for aid in disciplining their minds to habits of reflection" (AR 6). Reflection requires people to fix their attention "on the world within them, to induce them to study the processes and superintend the works which they are themselves carrying on in their own minds," and it is a habit built up only with great difficulty (AR 14). This reflective activity was not exclusively for what may be considered "purely intellectual matters," but also involved examining one's behavior and Christian life, since "an hour of solitude passed in sincere silence and earnest prayer, or the conflict with, and conquest over, a single passion, or 'subtle blossom sin,' will teach us more of thought, will more effectually awaken the *faculty*, and form the *habit*, of reflection, than a year's study in the schools without them" (AR 16). The result of developing this habit of introspection or reflecting is a "full faith in the Divine Word" that will "expand the intellect, while it purifie[s] the heart" (AR 18). The growth of the intellect and of proper affections are not two independent results of growth in the Christian faith, but "the exercise of the reasoning and reflecting powers, increasing insight, and enlarging views, are required to keep alive the substantial faith in the heart" (AR 20).

A discussion of Coleridge's devotional life flows naturally into his understanding of the sacraments, or, specifically for locating him in the landscape of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century theological and ecclesial traditions – particularly on his conception of Baptism. A brief discussion of Coleridge's view of the Eucharist is in order as a way of showing that Coleridge

played fully within the boundaries of orthodox early 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglicanism (both Evangelical and High Church) and not that he held views that would have been more at home in liberal Anglicanism (i.e., Latitudinarian or crypto-Unitarian) *or* that he may have pre-figured later Tractarian views. High Churchmen and Evangelicals were largely of one mind on their understanding of the Eucharist. While some mid-18<sup>th</sup> century High Churchmen maintained the Nonjuror position of “Virtualism,” a position whereby the bread and wine, “once set apart by consecration, while not changed physically into the body and blood of Our Lord, became so in *virtue*, power and effect.”<sup>586</sup> The doctrine of the “Real Presence was taught, but that presence was not located in the elements of bread and wine.”<sup>587</sup> However, the position that came to dominate all forms of orthodox thinking in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was “Receptionism,” or the teaching of a Real Presence but in a conditional way, such that “the Real Presence was subject to the worthiness of the recipient of the eucharist.”<sup>588</sup> This position would have been natural for the Evangelicals since it was put forward by the early framers of Anglican theology, namely Hooker and Daniel Waterland.<sup>589</sup> Some of the Hackney Phalanx came under the influence of Virtualism, but most even within this group came to “prefer the rival doctrine of receptionism.”<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 236-7.

<sup>587</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 237.

<sup>588</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 237. For Anglican Evangelicals “there is here no doctrine of the ‘Real Absence.’ Neither, of course, is there any trace of a doctrine of transubstantiation of the elements, or of the ‘medicine of immortality.’” Instead, the view was that “Divine grace is received by faith, not in an *ex opere operato* or mechanical fashion” (Davies 225). While Evangelicals continued to maintain this position relatively consistently through and past the conflict with the Tractarians, this conflict caused them to further specify the nature and location of Christ’s Real Presence (Davies 225-6). Prior to this conflict, as is natural when they felt no need to differentiate their view from others who put forward a conception of the Real Presence, almost all of the orthodox (Evangelical and High Church) Anglicans were willing to leave the specific nature of this presence in the realm of mystery.

<sup>589</sup> Nockles, “Church Parties,” 344.

<sup>590</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 237.

Coleridge's most concise view of the Eucharist can probably be found in a Notebook entry from October 1819 in which he said, "If we may trust the Table Talk, Luther himself taught at last the true christian doctrine of the Sacrament – Christus est *spiritualiter* in Sacramento – quo modo, non nobis est perscrutari. Rem credimus: modum nescimus [Christ is *spiritually* in the sacrament, it is not for us to study carefully how. We believe the occurrence/fact: we do not know the manner]" (CN IV 4599; translation mine). This he saw as not only Luther's doctrine, but of the Church of England itself. Coleridge noted in his copy of Jeremy Taylor's works that "I say, again and again, that I myself greatly prefer the general doctrine of our own Church, respecting the Eucharist.—*Rem credimus, modum nescimus*, to either the Trans-(or Con-)subt.<sup>n</sup> on the one hand, or to the *mere* signum or memoriae causâ of the Sacramentaries<sup>591</sup> <on the other>" (CM V 554). That Coleridge held that the bread and wine in the Eucharist only become the Eucharist through being received in faith is seen in yet another statement on Taylor's work in which he uses the Eucharist as an example to argue against Baptism being Baptism merely by nature of the ritual itself. He states that "Surely the wafer & the tea-spoonful of wine might be swallowed by an Infant, as well as water sprinkled upon him. But if the Former is not the Eucharist because without Faith & Repentance, so cannot the latter be Baptism. For they are declared equal Adjuncts of both Sacraments" (CM V 652). Here Coleridge clearly believes that faith and repentance were necessary for a reception of the Eucharist as Eucharist (and indeed of Baptism as Baptism).

In terms of locating Coleridge within either a High Church or Evangelical understanding of Baptism, it seems quite clear that Coleridge stood firmly within the range of Evangelical

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<sup>591</sup> A note from Coleridge's marginal notes on Taylor's *Worthy Communicant* clarifies that the terms "Sacramentaries"/ "Sacramentarians" describe all those "who in disputes about the Eucharist denied the doctrine of the Real Presence, including the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli" (CM V 671n4<sup>1</sup>).

positions. It will be remembered that views of Baptism were *the* primary distinguishing sacramental point between Evangelicals and High Churchmen in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. High Churchmen held to a strict and all-encompassing view of baptismal regeneration, following the language of the liturgy of Baptism. Looking forward to the later Tractarian understanding of baptismal regeneration, which can fairly be asserted of earlier High Church positions, the belief was that in Baptism “a child or adult lost the stain of original sin... by the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>592</sup> Here the appeal was made to the baptismal liturgy in the Prayer Book and the catechism, in which “an infant is declared regenerate at the end of the ceremony” and that “baptism is the occasion of our new birth,” with the liturgy applying to the former and the catechism to the latter.<sup>593</sup> The dividing line was drawn by the absolute position taken by most in the High Church camp: Any separation between regenerative grace and the rite of Baptism belied an “anti-sacramental animus and a rejection of the spiritual prerogatives of priesthood.”<sup>594</sup> The High Church view of baptismal regeneration intimately linked the regenerative grace to the rite itself. Evangelicals, on the other hand, held to a range of positions. Some believed that some sort of regenerative grace was conferred through the Rite, but that this grace was not necessarily and always linked to it, while others saw Baptism as only “proleptic and anticipatory in meaning, a kind of charter of Gospel privileges to be appropriated fully on attaining maturity.”<sup>595</sup>

That Coleridge rejected the hard line of the High Church position is almost undeniable. The quote about faith and repentance in relation to the Eucharist in the preceding paragraphs

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<sup>592</sup> Davies, *Theology and Worship, II*, 1.270.

<sup>593</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*, 9.

<sup>594</sup> Nockles, *Oxford Movement*, 230.

<sup>595</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology, II*, 1.226. Davies here seems to be speaking about *infant* Baptism specifically; one can assume that in those instances of adult Baptism, the Baptism serves as an outward sign and recognition of the inward regeneration brought about through repentance and faith.

clearly demonstrates that Coleridge saw no necessary relationship between the Rite performed by the priest and grace bestowed by God. At other points, Coleridge affirmed that any belief that “the mystic water would cleanse the baptized person from all sin and (if he died immediately after the performance of the ceremony,) would send him pure and spotless into the other world” is to be rejected vigorously as “Superstition” (AR 369). In commenting on Taylor, he said that any implication that the Holy Spirit “is said to *operate* simply & without the co-operation of the Subject” is “rank Enthusiasm” (CM V 652). Moreover, Coleridge indicates that no grace that can be conveyed through Baptism is in any way necessary in and of itself for Christian salvation. “In the strictest sense of essential,” it is “such a faith in Christ as tends to produce a conformity to his holy doctrines and example in heart and life, and which faith is itself a declared mean and condition of our partaking of his spiritual body” that is “alone the essential in Christianity” (AR 366-7). It is “neither the outward ceremony of Baptism, under any form or circumstance, nor any other ceremony” that “properly makes us Christians” (AR 366). The only time when a failure to be baptized would indicate that one is not saved is when this “omission should arise from a spirit of disobedience,” rather than the lack of opportunity or knowledge of the fittingness of undergoing the Rite, and “in this case it is the cause, not the effect, the wilful and unbaptized Heart, not the unbaptizing hand, that perils it” (AR 367).

The question at hand, then, is not whether he should be positioned in the Evangelical or High Church camp; rather, it is whether Coleridge should be located nearer the Evangelical position that allowed some room for Baptismal regeneration or the position that almost wholly rejected it. It seems fair to locate Coleridge much closer to the latter than the former. Coleridge believed that the external Rite and ceremony was, for the one being baptized at least, only a

sprinkling of water without an interior faith and repentance, and it is faith and repentance alone that properly speaking were the conditions for saving grace.

Coleridge's most extensive argument about the nature of Baptism occurs in *Aids to Reflection*, and it is from this argument that one can gain a greater sense that he actually should be placed in the non-Regenerationist camp. Coleridge writes for a hypothetical interlocutor who is "a born and bred Baptist, and paternally descended from the old orthodox non-Conformists" who had come to Coleridge seeking his opinions on infant baptism when his wife, a member of the Church of England, desired that their first child be baptized (AR 361). This set-up already frames the issue such that Coleridge's understanding of the relationship between faith, repentance, and Baptism shifts the argumentative burden to the person wanting to maintain infant Baptism. He concedes that from a scriptural point of view or from the witness of the "Apostolic age," he cannot marshal firm and definitive proof for infant Baptism, and even if one supposes it to have been used during this early period of Christianity, it was "of comparatively rare occurrence"; the most that Scripture and the Apostolic witness can definitively provide is that they provide no express condemnation of infant baptism (AR 364-5). At the same time, Coleridge believed that there are good reasons for keeping the practice. Appealing to the authority of the Reformers, Coleridge believed that infant Baptism could not have contained anything "fatal or imminently perilous to Salvation," because otherwise they would have shared with the Radical Reformers a rejection of the practice (AR 376). Additionally, Infant Baptism has positive aspects, viz., it indicated to the world that the Church considers an individual a member of the Church; and it marked out this individual for the special "Dearness, that watchful and disciplinary Love and Loving-kindness, which *over and above* the affections and duties of Philanthropy and Universal Charity, Christ himself had enjoined" (AR 370).



What Coleridge thinks happens in Infant Baptism is highly reminiscent of the “lower” Evangelical view that “the ordinance was proleptic and anticipatory in meaning, a kind of charter of Gospel privileges to be appropriated fully on attaining maturity.”<sup>596</sup> Coleridge made statements in various places about his understanding of (infant) Baptism that conform to this description. In a letter to Thomas Methuen, Coleridge states that “the [Baptismal] prayer evidently implies that the actual operation of the Spirit is future and conditional. The whole prayer is prospective — ‘Grant that this child may receive the fulness of grace;’ and therefore all that follows may rationally, and in my opinion ought to be, likewise understood as prospective” (CL IV 582).<sup>597</sup> Furthermore, in his notes on Jeremy Taylor, he stated that, referring to baptized infants, “the Spirit is promised to them, first as Protection & Providence, and as internal Operation when those faculties are developed, in & by which the Spirit co-operates” (CM V 652). Coleridge partially rejected the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration because he saw it as not only superstition, but *needless* superstition. Because children until a certain age had not fully developed rationality, they were not yet co-operant subjects (CM V 653).<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> Davies, *Worship and Theology, II*, 1.226.

<sup>597</sup> There are two aspects of this letter that point even more favorably toward Coleridge’s not only having rejected a *necessary* link between Baptism and regeneration, but having rejected baptismal regeneration all together. Coleridge speaks of attempting to refute “our opponents” on the question of Baptism, which indicates that he held to a substantially similar view of Baptism as Methuen. One of the points that Methuen’s son makes about his father’s theological position was that, despite his not having been a strict Calvinist, he nevertheless “looked also upon the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration as the food of self-righteousness, and it is perhaps not too strong to say that he abhorred it” (Methuen, 222). Furthermore, in this letter Coleridge speaks of arguing against the positions of Bishop Mant and his understanding of the liturgy. Mant was a High Church controversialist who held that anyone who did not accept the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration was a heretic, and he explicitly targeted the Evangelicals, whom he saw as “reducing the Sacrament to a bare sign” (Ervine, 64).

<sup>598</sup> Coleridge held this view strongly, going so far as to say that instances of a young child who received the Spirit, such as was recorded about Daniel, had to have resulted from God having “miraculously hastened the development of his understanding” (CM V 653). Thus, while Coleridge did not believe that the infant could have the gracious working of the Spirit on his or her consciousness because there was not properly speaking a *consciousness* to work upon, this also meant that one need not fear for children who died prior to Baptism being damned. Infants are “free from and incapable of *crime*” and in whom original sin “was present only as *potential* being”; it only became actual with the emergence of a cooperative subject and true human consciousness (AR 372).

One of the main points that has to be reconciled with Coleridge's holding to the Evangelical view of Baptism that was farthest from the High Church position was that those Evangelicals who held to this view almost always placed an extremely high value on the conversion experience. What, then, should one do with Coleridge's PRECAUTIONARY REMARK towards the beginning of *Aids to Reflection* in which he stated that "we meddle not with the dispute respecting *conversion*, whether, and in what sense, necessary in all Christians" (AR 33). Nevertheless, he goes on to say that "it is sufficient for our purpose, that a very *large* number of men even in Christian countries need to be converted, and that not a few, we trust, have been" (AR 33). On the surface, Coleridge would seem to be leaving some room for conversion not to be necessary for all people. However, what is likely going on is not a rejection of conversion *per se* as an individual's personal repentance leading to faith in the redeeming power of Christ and being born anew in the Spirit. This Coleridge certainly thought was necessary for the beginning of true Christianity. Instead, Coleridge appears to use "conversion" in a stricter sense of meaning "instantaneous conversion" whereby someone is convicted of their sin, repents, and receives faith in an extremely short period of time. Speaking of the examples of most of the Apostles other than Paul, Coleridge understood them to have been made apostles by being "carved out...by degrees and in the course of time" (AR 33n). Furthermore, Coleridge speaks about the expectation of conversion becoming "fanatical and dangerous, only when rare and extraordinary exceptions are made to be the general rule," namely when "a conversion begun and completed in the same moment is demanded and expected of all men" (AR 33). Coleridge suggests that just as "under many circumstances the magnetic needle, even after the disturbing influence has been removed, will keep wavering, and require many days before it points aright, and remains steady to the pole," it is also the case "ordinarily with the soul, after it has begun to

free itself from the disturbing forces of the flesh and the world, and to convert itself towards God” (AR 33). Because he compares these two scenarios, with one being the exceptional case and the other being the usual course of events, it seems Coleridge *did* actually believe conversion necessary for all Christians, so long as one lets the concept of conversion include a “period” of repenting – rather than only a moment of repentance – between initial awakening and New Birth.

In this way, Coleridge shows himself to have been well within the mainstream of moderate second generation Anglican Evangelicalism. In 1803 the *Christian Observer* “ran a series of fictional articles depicting three characters, Amanda, Theodosia, and Euboea.”<sup>599</sup> Each character represented a different strand of religious thought in England, with Amanda representing a non-evangelical Anglican with suspicions about Evangelicals, Theodosia as a sectarian evangelical, and Euboea as a model Anglican Evangelical. Euboea had no “sudden conversion,” but instead a gradual growth in her awareness of an awakened conscience, and she was rooted in classical Anglican writers such as “Cranmer, Ridley, Jewel, Andrewes, Hooker, Usher, and Hall.”<sup>600</sup> While Euboea was clearly meant to be the model for Anglicans, the *Observer* treated Amanda better than Theodosia, showing the Anglican Evangelical respect for formal Anglican religiosity. Theodosia received the harshest treatment, and she was represented as habitually judging the spiritual state of others and showing no regard for civil and ecclesial authority or order. “Her conversion had of course been sudden and dramatic and anyone not able to relate the time and the place of theirs was a suspect Christian.”<sup>601</sup> Furthermore, the strand of Evangelicalism that looked beyond the cross alone for understanding Christ and Redemption, as

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<sup>599</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 22.

<sup>600</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 23.

<sup>601</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 23.

seen in thinkers such as Budd or Hoare and which would seem to most characterize Coleridge's approach, emphasized the “motif of order or continuity,” making it “appreciate the idea of a gradual conversion or a gradual working out of baptismal grace.”<sup>602</sup>

The last element in Coleridge’s thinking that helps to locate him within the confines of moderate Evangelicalism was his understanding of the Established Church, his relationship to its liturgy and theology in the Book of Common Prayer, and his ambiguous understanding and connection to other Christian bodies. It is in this discussion that Coleridge not only can have his connection to Evangelical Anglicanism finalized, but it also demonstrates that his understanding of the National Church, like that of many other Evangelicals, was more ambivalent than the ecclesiology of High Church thinkers.

One of the elements that distinguished the 18<sup>th</sup> century predecessors to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Evangelical party from those clergy more closely aligned with the Methodist movement was a conflict about church order. Whereas the Wesleyan and Whitfieldian Methodists would engage in “irregular” practices such as itinerant preaching and the use of lay preachers, and Wesley’s ultimate willingness as a presbyter to ordain clergy, proto-Evangelicals were much more hesitant or outright hostile to this seeming disregard for proper Church order. These clergymen (and they were at first almost all clergy) were certainly open to the theological emphases and piety

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<sup>602</sup> Ervine, “Doctrine and Diplomacy,” 239. Many of these elements also showed that he had very little affinity with the early 19<sup>th</sup> century High Church tradition. Whereas the High Church tradition looked to the early Church and Patristic traditions, as well as 16<sup>th</sup> century Arminian High Church divines such as Laud, Coleridge saw the Church of England as a properly Reformation body and sought to ground his theology on the authority of Elizabethan and Calvinist Caroline Divines, as well as holding the Puritans in high esteem. The High Church tradition in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly among the dominant Hackney Phalanx, was highly suspicious of introspection; Coleridge made it a central and necessary part of Christian piety. While Arminianism was not exclusively a High Church phenomenon in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 19<sup>th</sup> century High Churchmen were almost exclusively Arminian and generally hostile to what they perceived as Calvinism. Coleridge, while he preferred to understand his doctrines as those in common with all the Reformers, drew a line in the sand between these views and Arminianism, seeing the latter as something qualitatively different. Finally, on the sacramental position that most divided Evangelicals and High Churchmen, *viz.*, baptismal regeneration, Coleridge not only rejected the necessity of baptismal regeneration, he took the more stringent Evangelical position in rejecting baptismal regeneration almost altogether.

practiced by Methodists, but they felt that these should be done within the confines of established parochial boundaries and following the pre- and proscriptions of Anglican polity. At the same time, they worked with and had many colleagues who practiced this greater irregularity or who became members of dissenting groups. This distinction became more pronounced after the formation of the various Wesleyan Methodist denominations after the 1790s, and it led to many Evangelicals who chose to stay within the Church of England more vigorously defending *both* their claim to being properly evangelical *and* to their attachment to the order and structure of the Established Church. At the same time, relationships with dissenting evangelicals continued to exist and Evangelicals often had a sense of greater spiritual and theological solidarity with evangelicals outside of their church than with non-evangelical Anglicans. This all led to a situation where, “by 1800, among Evangelicals at large the regulars were overwhelmingly in the ascendant. Irregularity was frowned on and its few remaining practitioners were soon to be strongly criticized in the pages of the *Christian Observer*” (as seen in the example of the greater grace extended to the Anglican Amanda than to the dissenting Theodosia above).<sup>603</sup>

However, a conflict remained for the Evangelical that did not exist for the High Churchman. Evangelicals saw the church as part of the *bene esse* bordering on *esse* of the Christian faith, but they saw the fallibility of the specific structures of the English Church and its Liturgy, however highly they regarded them. Thus, Evangelicals believed in the superiority of the Established Church, but this was born more out of a sense of practical concerns, such as the ability of the Established Church to comprehend a more Universal Christianity or the proneness of dissenters toward schism. The boundary between Established and Dissenting Christians was more one of degree of error admitted (and not necessarily of error that imperiled salvation) than

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<sup>603</sup> Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 41.

the hard boundary pre-Tractereian High Church thinkers put between the real Christianity necessarily connected to the Church of England and the false, heretical, and schismatic “Christianity” of dissenting groups. Grayson Carter provides a succinct and clear summary of the normal Evangelical attitude toward the Established Church in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century:

Despite the presence of minor imperfections in the Church and its formularies, most evangelicals remained adamant that secession to Protestant Dissent was unjustified. Although their catholic spirit could readily countenance fellowship with evangelical Dissenters, they regarded the Church as immeasurably superior to Nonconformity. Dissent was seen as unbalanced and prone to schism. In its chapels, Simeon and others alleged, the congregation held a dangerous whip hand over its minister, whose salary it provided, and so prevented him from preaching the Gospel fearlessly in the way possible for the clergy in a State Church whose incomes came from endowments and tithes.

The Dissent of evangelical Christians was seen as essentially unnecessary. It was not to be compared to the separations of the Church of England from the Church of Rome which had apostatized from the faith, for the foundations of the English Church were pure and reformed. Those who went over to Dissent were schismatics who divided the body of Christ. None the less, the Evangelical clergy urged their people to treat Dissenters with charity and kindness and not to anathematize them in the style of some High Churchmen. Since much Dissent stemmed from the lack of ‘real’ religion in the Church, the best way to prevent its further progress was for the Established clergy to out-preach their rivals by a fervent exposition of the Gospel.<sup>604</sup>

So, if Coleridge is to be located among Anglican Evangelicals in an ecclesiological sense, it would seem necessary to demonstrate these features: a sense of the superiority, but not *absolute* superiority, of the Established Church; a sense that this superiority was born more often from contingent and practical concerns; and a sense of charity toward Dissent. I believe it is possible to demonstrate all of these points, along with a common understanding of the imperfections of the Church that nonetheless did not negate its superiority over Dissent.

I will begin this argument by looking at Barth’s general description of how Coleridge came to regard the Established Church by the end of his life, particularly as described in Coleridge’s work *On the Constitution of the Church and State*. For Coleridge, the established Church, by being bound up with England, was a good to be preserved because “the Established Church is part of the nation” and the idea of a national church offered “not only spiritual unity

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<sup>604</sup> Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 16.

but also intellectual coherence and continuity to the nation.”<sup>605</sup> However, Coleridge clearly indicated that one should and could not identify the National Church with the Christian Church, and it was this distinction that actually made the continued existence of the National Church a grounds for an expansive toleration. The National Church not only *could* coexist with Dissenting Christian bodies, but should provide the means for securing toleration. Coleridge held that the “visible Established Church does not fully embody the reality of the spiritual Church of Christ, and that other churches may express aspects of that reality. The Established Church is to protect not only its own rights but those of all churches.”<sup>606</sup> One sees this larger concern for an inclusive view of Christianity in his formulation of “Articles of Faith Necessary to Christians” in 1830, in which he stated beliefs that he thought could be expansive enough to comprehend “the Ministers of all other Churches, Lutheran or Calvinistic, Arminian or [? Zwinglian], Presbyterian or Independent,” but not so expansive as to allow what he saw as politically subversive (but not generally theologically incorrect) Roman Catholicism or the heretical and non-Christian “modern Unitarians” (SW&F 1486). He even clearly identifies his understanding that these other groups, as Christians, should be permitted to coexist in England and may play an important and necessary function for English Religious life: Regarding these different groups, “you neither need nor can *all* of you be Ministers of the National Church of England, any more than *all* Country Gentlemen can or need be Justices of the <Peace; but I receive you all, as Members of the *Christian* Church in England—& to with any of you, whom I hold competent, I would interchange [? in <the> Pulpit]” (SW&F 1486).<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Barth, “Coleridge and the Church of England,” in *Coleridge Connection: Essays for Thomas McFarland*, eds. Richard Gravil and Molly Lefebure (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 266-7.

<sup>606</sup> Barth, “Church of England,” 268-9.

<sup>607</sup> If anything, Coleridge has a more tolerant view of other Protestant Churches than would be expected of an Evangelical Anglican given Carter’s description.

Coleridge held *both* to the goodness and necessity of the National Church as well as the spiritual legitimacy of most other (Protestant) Christians.<sup>608</sup> That he saw the Church of England as not only deserving special status by being the National Church, but that it was superior to other fellowships is seen in his affirmation that “I believe (as I do) the Church of England to be the *most* Apostolic Church” (AR 381). He even went so far as to affirm that a person with difficulties with the Church of England who sought “the Escape through the Channel of Dissent is from the Frying-Pan to the Fire” (AR 381).<sup>609</sup>

Furthermore, if one looks to the ways in which Coleridge viewed the fallibility of the Church and the Liturgy, while still holding them in high regard, one sees that Coleridge had no problem recognizing imperfections in the Established Church’s prayer and polity. Coleridge, despite his high regard for the National Church, would not hold to the “perfect Truth of each and every word in the Prayer-book” (AR 381). Moreover, in his letter to Methuen, Coleridge admitted that “the framers of that Liturgy were eminently pious, learned, and wise men. But they were not inspired men. Nor does the Church of England pretend to supersede the study of the Scripture by the pretences [sic] of infallible interpretation” (CL IV 582). Coleridge noted on Article VII of the Articles of Religion that he could give his “amen” to the confession that “The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Holy Sacraments, set forth by the Authority

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<sup>608</sup> Coleridge’s opposition to Roman Catholicism is complex phenomena that deserves its own treatment; it was not, however, at all out of line with general Evangelical attitudes, and in some ways Coleridge proved *more* tolerant of Roman Catholics than other English Protestants of his time.

<sup>609</sup> Similarly, Coleridge associates Dissent and schism, although here he rarely challenged those who already belonged to Dissenting groups and more often followed the Evangelicals in arguing the those who desired to leave the Church of England were acting schismatically. For instance, in his conclusion to his argument about Baptism in *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge finally states that because there is room within the Church of England for a variety of views about Baptism, those who leave the Church are acting out of a spirit of Schism: “the Person who *at any time* can regard this difference [the dispute between various Christians in the Church of England about Baptism] as *singly* warranting a separation form a religious Community, must think of Schism under another point of View, than I have been taught to contemplate it by St. Paul in his epistles to the Corinthians” (AR 377).



of Parliament, is agreeable to the Scriptures, and that it is Catholick, Apostolick, and most for the advancing of God's Glory" so long as his assent was not contradicted by "the knowledge of its [the Prayer book's] fallible origin" (CM I 838).

While the Evangelicals likely had certain qualms about the liturgy (and especially on the point that Coleridge seems also to have had problems, viz., the Baptismal Liturgy), they were among all other Anglicans at the time the most likely to embrace the Reformation origins and teaching of the Articles of Religion as a true representation of Christian faith. Coleridge not only saw himself as believing whatever was commonly held by all the Reformers, but had a regular habit of associating the Articles of Religion and the common teaching of the Reformation. Coleridge states that *Arminianism* in its particular Laudian, Anglican High Church form was "a habit of Belief opposed not to Calvinism or the Works of Calvin, but to the Articles of our own Church, and to the Doctrine in which *all* the first Reformers agreed" (CM I 358).<sup>610</sup> While it was not universal among Evangelicals, if there was one element in the teaching of the Church of England that was disliked, it was the Athanasian Creed.<sup>611</sup> The only article that received any substantial pushback from Coleridge was that which dealt with the Creeds, and specifically the Athanasian Creed: Coleridge here stated that

I hold the (so called) Athanasian Creed to be not false but imperfect, but yet unfit to be a public Creed because the whole Truth in a Doctrine setting forth a one Idea is necessary to the perfection of each and every of the Truths therein contained, or of the distinct Verities contemplated in the untroubled Unity of the Idea. Now the Creed truly expressed the quality of Attributers and the Identity of the Godhead; but does not confess the subordination of the Persons (CM I 836-7).

A final point showing Coleridge working within an Evangelical outlook was his relationship to the Bible Society. "The British and Foreign Bible Society, which was started in

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<sup>610</sup> This echoes the sentiment he put forward in the notes on Sedgwick that doctrines of the Established Church as put forward in the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies are no different than the union of "Calvinism & Lutheranism" (CM IV 658).

<sup>611</sup> Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 15.

1804, was the first pan-evangelical institution to win patronage of most evangelicals in the various denominations. Evangelicals were encouraged to participate because of its one, uncomplicated objective, to distribute the Bible.”<sup>612</sup> What is significant about the Bible Society was that while its mission was not complicated, association with it became highly polarizing. Association with the Bible Society could bring strong critiques from certain High Church figures, and even those who did not fit neatly into an Evangelical mold were subject to criticism because of their association with this group. For instance, the High Churchman Thomas Sikes, who was “obsessed with the bogey of a ‘Puritan’ conspiracy,” “sharply criticized Porteus for his patronage the Bible Society.”<sup>613</sup> Thus, association with the Bible Society was not something that failed to differentiate Evangelicals from non-Evangelicals in the Church of England, but to the contrary was a quite clear indicator that one was at least sympathetic to Evangelicalism. It is not an insignificant indicator of Coleridge’s Evangelical leanings that he stated in *Confessions* that he had “frequently attended the <great> meetings of the <B. & F.> Bible Society” (SW&F 1148). Also, in the same letter in which Coleridge puts forward his Evangelical sounding position on Baptism to Methuen, he begins by saying that “I have more than once told you, that I am most friendly to the Bible Society and every thing connected with it, excepting enthusiastic anticipations of immediate effects” (CL IV 581).

One, two, or even three commonalities between Coleridge and the larger style of Evangelical Anglicanism could possibly be explained as a matter of cultural convergence. However, I hope I have presented a convincing case that Coleridge exhibited almost every one of the defining elements of this identity, including not only features that served to distinguish

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<sup>612</sup> Hylston-Smith, *Evangelicals*, 98.

<sup>613</sup> Nockles, “Church parties,” 353.

Evangelicals from their early 19<sup>th</sup> century High Church counterparts, but also those that formed a positive identity matrix for Anglican Evangelicals. Coleridge made use of distinctively Evangelical language; he attempted a systematized exposition of the distinctive elements of evangelical Biblical interpretation; he put forward a view of vital Christianity consonant with the distinctive view of evangelicals; his personal and corporate piety was almost exactly what one would expect of an Evangelical; he embraced the more stringent Evangelical position on Baptismal regeneration; he found authority for his theological positions in a distinctively *Reformation* view of the Church of England and a general Augustinian understanding of Christianity, including the utmost reverence for the darling of the Evangelicals, Robert Leighton; and he had a view of the Established Church that would have found no opposition among Evangelicals. While I am sure that it is possible to find different Liberal/Latitudinarian or High Church thinkers who differed from their “ideal types” and could be shown to embrace any one of these “distinctive” Evangelical emphases, I can say with the utmost confidence that there would be no figure from either of these camps who would satisfy *all* of these distinguishing features (and if one did find such a person, one could be pushed to ask why they were not included as an Evangelical). The same would seem to go for any attempt to claim a *completely sui generis* status for Coleridge’s theological position; there can be no doubt that he was, while remaining an Evangelical, a *sui generis* form of Anglican Evangelical, but, as said in the introduction, his idiosyncratic position within Evangelicalism is possible precisely because he can be located within its bounds.

A fitting conclusion to this discussion of how Coleridge should be thought of within the Church of England seems to come from one of the final statements he makes in *Aids to Reflection*, and one that I have already quoted in part. Coleridge says:

Enough for me, if in my Heart of Hearts, free from all fear of man and all lust of preferment, I believe (as I do) the Church of England to be the *most* Apostolic Church; that its doctrines and ceremonies contain nothing dangerous to Righteousness or Salvation; and that the imperfections in its Liturgy are spots indeed, but spots on the sun, which impede neither its Light nor its Heat, so as to prevent the good seed from growing in a good soil and producing fruits of Redemption (AR 381).

Coleridge had been seeking a union of Methodist warmth and Socinian light since 1797; nearly 30 years later he finally found his sun, and he found it in an imperfect Church of England with an imperfect Liturgy, in an imperfection conducive to the fruits of Redemption that could have characterized the conception of the Church of any number of Anglican Evangelicals.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

For those familiar with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's thought, a positive association between his religious thought and Evangelicalism probably came as something of a surprise, to say nothing of the claim that Coleridge ultimately became some kind of Anglican Evangelical. Most interpreters have understood his religious affiliation in the second half of his life as some sort of generic conservative Anglicanism. Those who have entertained some connection between Coleridge and evangelicalism have focused on how the movement made room for the emergence of Romanticism generically by elevating the importance of the affections in late 18<sup>th</sup> century British society. Even then, though, the general perception about Britain's most influential Romantics is that they began their careers with ambivalence or hostility to traditional Christianity only to return to a façade of orthodoxy later in life as part of an increasingly reactionary political, social, and aesthetic vision. Coleridge has until now largely been studied by literary scholars who feel out of their depth in his theological and philosophical thinking, by philosophers interested in locating Coleridge's philosophical thought, or by religious scholars interested in giving synopses of Coleridge's Christian belief itself. Whether from lack of interest, expertise, or opportunity, attempts to contextualize Coleridge's religious thought have focused on his earlier Unitarian thinking while neglecting how his 19<sup>th</sup> century theology fit into to the larger landscape of British religious thought.

I have attempted in this work to provide a thorough evaluation of the larger British religious landscape in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, expanded from a consideration of

formal theology to include style and culture, and in doing this mapped Coleridge's later religious thought onto this landscape. Having done this work, I think I can argue confidently that Coleridge returned to the Church of England not as a "generic" orthodox Anglican, but as a moderate Evangelical. All that remains for the argument itself is to bring these lines of analysis together. Once this is done, I believe that the burden of proof will be on those who remain skeptical of Coleridge's Evangelical status.

I began by showing the range of theological thought in Britain's long 18<sup>th</sup> *religious* century, from the formation of Dissent during the Restoration until the first Tracts of the Oxford Movement in 1833<sup>614</sup>. A tradition of high Enlightenment theology (high in the sense of holding a high view of human reason) emerged most prominently as Deism in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and then was picked up by theological Socinians in the various church bodies and institutionally enshrined in Unitarianism. While the tone of these movements shifted from the rhetorically harsher Deists to the more optimistic Unitarians, and the underlying understanding of "rationality" evolved to follow its scientific and philosophical corollaries, this larger tradition shared a high view of an innate human capacity to know the world, a belief "reason" would liberate people from an oppressive and capricious social order, and a general disregard for mystery and "supernaturalism." This movement provoked a reaction from those committed to greater doctrinal orthodoxy such as Joseph Butler and William Paley. Regardless of the final doctrinal and ecclesial tenor coming from these thinkers, they still shared a central commitment to religious rationalism seen in the more radical thinkers. "Latitudinarianism" represented a more chastened wing of "liberal" Christianity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This movement shared a commitment to toleration of a more limited set of doctrinal essentials with a wider range of

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<sup>614</sup> Coincidentally, a year before Coleridge's death.

interpretations, the rationality of Christian belief, and the moral life as a conditional part of salvation. Latitudinarianism was, by design, a big tent, and one can think of it as a tendency within the Church of England applying to anyone wanting a more limited sense of “necessary” Christian doctrine, suspicious of or seeing little need for mystery, and desiring a functional Christianity to secure a this-world morality and social order.

“Orthodoxy” in the Church of England, particularly at the outset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, generally meant Evangelicalism or High Churchmanship. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the High Church tradition largely accepted the same formal theological beliefs as most Evangelicals, but with significant differences in emphasis and interpretation. The High Church tradition emphasized the ecclesial mediation of God’s grace for salvation, and thus the Church of England alone as the “true” Church. The greatest theological difference was avoidance if not active hostility toward “Calvinism.” They found authority in the patristic Church, ecumenical councils, and the Laudian Churchmanship of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. High Church and Evangelical Christians viewed the Eucharist similarly, but they drew a line in the sand on the issue of baptismal regeneration; anything short of full equation of New Birth and Baptism, with Baptism as the only means of removing the guilt of original sin, constituted heresy. Particularly with the Hackney Phalanx, late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century High Church figures differed significantly from the Tractarians by a general suspicion of inwardness and reflection.

Early evangelicals shared most of the formal doctrinal commitments with orthodox High Church figures, but emphasized original sin, justification by faith alone, Christ’s redemptive death on the cross, the need for conversion and “New Birth,” and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Evangelicals had a sense of true faith as going beyond intellectual assent to propositions (i.e., belief) to include a living, restored relationship with a personal God.

Evangelicals of all types felt a strong need for assurance from the Holy Spirit and emphasized introspection and self-examination as means of confirming this assurance and seeing signs of growing sanctification. Evangelicals almost exclusively among pre-Tractarian British religious traditions sang hymns in public and private worship, used journal and diary keeping as a spiritual exercise, and made use of Conversion Narratives as a distinctive evangelical literary genre.

There was a theological divide between Arminian and Calvinist evangelicals, although the Arminians were generally of a Wesleyan type that still emphasized justification by faith alone and rejected the semi-Pelagian Arminianism of non-Evangelicals. While some were so-called “hyper-Calvinists,” most evangelical Calvinists were of a much more moderate variety, emphasizing a private, pastoral, and non-speculative view of election. Anglican Evangelicals in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for the most part remained within the bounds of early evangelicalism as its most moderated form, even if a faction emerged in the 1820s that prefigured more conservative contemporary charismatic/evangelical movements. Rather than dramatic conversion experiences with highly public emotional displays, Evangelicals emphasized a personal development from self-concern to love of Christ and a subsequent progressive moral transformation. They were generally moderate Calvinists, although they sought to bridge gaps with evangelical Arminians.

Evangelical Anglicans both highly regarded the liturgy and structure of the Church of England *and* developed a way of integrating more extemporaneous forms of evangelical piety into a culture of individual and family prayer. Evangelical Anglicans tended to rein in excessive claims of Spiritual inspiration and emphasized the traditional means of grace of prayer, Bible reading, and regular worship founded on an internal, perceptible love of God. One of the defining features for *Anglican* Evangelicalism was an ambivalence toward other evangelical groups. They usually



saw the superiority of the Established Church, but did not go nearly as far as many High Church thinkers by excluding dissenting groups *a priori* from true Christianity.

When one looks at Coleridge's thought *and* religious style/cultural markers by the time of his death in 1834, there are significant indicators that one should locate him as some kind of moderate Anglican Evangelical. Coleridge's stated doctrinal commitments from around the time of his renunciation of Unitarianism and re-adoption of Trinitarian orthodoxy sometime around 1805-7 already began echoing the general emphases of the evangelical revival. Coleridge placed belief in original sin and corruption, the need for redemption through Christ, the primacy of scriptural revelation, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit as beliefs that are the "peculiar doctrines" of Christianity. The only thing that changed in his doctrinal summary by 1830 was that he had come to emphasize the need to believe in a personal God to whom one could pray, a shift which only strengthens a connection with an Evangelical prayer piety. Indeed, in the time between his doctrinal summaries, Coleridge expressed that his beliefs were closer to the Evangelicals than to non-Evangelicals in the Church of England. Looking to Coleridge's philosophical theology, one sees greater metaphysical concern than was usual among English thinkers of any affiliation from this period, as well as gaining a deeper appreciation for the Evangelical character of his theology. He emphasized the need for not only external moral behavior, but for the subordination of one's will to the Will of God through a union with the Logos, which, as a result of original sin is only possible through Christ's redemptive death leading to our spiritual rebirth and our inner transformation into Christ through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. While Coleridge's emphasis on a more restorative rather than atoning work of Christ would put him in the minority among Anglican Evangelicals, some important moderate Evangelicals also wanted a view of atonement that included but extended beyond the

cross. Also significant for this discussion is *how* Coleridge approached his philosophical theology. He certainly used categories drawn from Kantian and post-Kantian German Idealism, but he seems to have found in them a way to order a general pastoral pragmatism characteristic of evangelicalism. More than seeking ways to delve deeper into metaphysical explanations of points left unexplored for Evangelicals, Coleridge provided metaphysical explanations for why these mysteries could not be explained.

Following the lead of intellectual historians like Isabel Rivers, I have contended throughout this argument that religious identity should not be thought of as merely a set of beliefs or even beliefs and practices, but also flows from a larger “style” or “culture” that also encompasses distinctive vocabulary, genres of communication, and perceived opponents. In this way, Coleridge showed an affinity with Evangelicals beyond doctrinal commitments and theological method. He employed language common to Evangelicals, such that even the thematic image for his intellectual project may have been directly modeled on John Newton’s own words. Coleridge shared the Evangelicals’s sense that religion should move beyond “cold” belief to involve the whole person, and that one’s good works should spring from gracious and sincere affection for God and God’s saving work. He may have been influenced by Anglican Evangelical conversion narratives and included a kind of inchoate version of one in his *Biographia Literaria*. He put forward a treatise on biblical interpretation which retained a high place for biblical inspiration, but rejected a doctrine of plenary inspiration in favor of one that preserved the Spirit’s capacity to meet the believer through the text – possibly *the* distinguishing feature of evangelical and Pietist approaches to Scripture at the time. He opposed Socinianism, Unitarianism, and other crypto-Socinian (in his mind) forms of “rational Christianity,” as well as an Arminianism that seemed Pelagian to him. Coleridge grounded his theology and vision of

Anglicanism on the authority of a common Reformation and broadly Augustinian heritage. He read and approved of authors who were not only generally the purview of evangelicals, but also held in highest regard Robert Leighton, the theological luminary of the Evangelicals, as well as figures who were almost universally avoided by non-Evangelicals, such as Bunyan and Baxter. Sacramentally, Coleridge held to a receptionist view of the Eucharist, which was to be expected of both Evangelicals and High Churchmen, but he maintained the more extreme and definitively Evangelical rejection (not tempering) of baptismal regeneration. His piety demonstrated a high regard for the study of Scripture and individual prayer and meditation while also holding the Prayer Book liturgy as an imperfect but still exemplary form of conducting communal worship. Finally, he saw the Church of England as the most excellent Church *in* England, but he did not see it as exclusively the Church. While ambivalent about other Protestants, even evangelical Protestants such as Methodists, he still believed they deserved toleration, protection, and could contribute certain things to national religious life that the Established Church possibly could not.

Before he even returned to Trinitarian orthodoxy, at least confessionally, Coleridge sought a sun that would unite the dim warmth of Methodism and the cool moonlight of Socinianism, poles that corresponded to extremes of purely affective or intellectual religiosity, rooted in blind will or fully unaffected intellect, both of which would lead – if left disjointed – to superstition, fanaticism, and atheism. Still, he did not see equal value, or at least equal danger, in these two disjoints and thought the Methodist pole the much lesser of the two evils. Insofar as one allows for a more philosophically systematized evangelicalism, Coleridge appears to have provided a more robust philosophical and more explicated theological foundation for the Anglicanism, of a moderate Evangelical form, that he came to accept as his own. It actually makes substantial sense that this would be the location from which Coleridge would extend his

theological and philosophical vision; nearly all leading figures in the larger evangelical revival and particularly Evangelical Anglicanism sought to accommodate some degree of enlightenment rationalism. While Coleridge could not accept the *forms* that this rationalism took, and the movement could lose this synthetic character in its popular forms, evangelicalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was already a tradition “primed” for synthesis. That Coleridge would arrive in the form of evangelicalism that self-consciously appropriated language of Anglican order and moderation, and had to defend itself as the true *via media* between a more conservative Lutheran Protestantism and that of the Radical Reformation appears quite appropriate.<sup>615</sup>

I maintain that this argument helps to explain Coleridge’s whole intellectual development better than the traditional interpretation. However, this is not to say that there are no valid objections to it. For instance, if Coleridge indeed slots into every defining feature of Evangelical Anglicanism, why has no one come to this conclusion before? To this, I would say first that there has been at least one attempt: a dissertation called “Coleridge’s Statement and Defence of the Evangelical Faith as Ultimate Metaphysics,” which I believe deficient, but in a way that actually helps my position.<sup>616</sup> The deficiency lies in a lack of substantial engagement (through lack of available sources not negligence) with much of Coleridge’s at that time unpublished material. Thus, even without the evidence I drew from letters, notebooks, and Marginalia, it is possible to construct a defensible argument that Coleridge defended some sort of metaphysically robust evangelicalism. The second reason I would say that it has not been observed is because people do not seem to have known that they should have been looking for this connection or would not

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<sup>615</sup> In contrast to the interpretation of the *via media* held by High Churchmen (Anglicanism existing between the Reformation and Roman Catholicism) or of Latitudinarians (between Unitarianism and dogmatic orthodoxy).

<sup>616</sup> Henry Milton Taylor, “Coleridge’s Statement and Defence [sic] of the Evangelical Faith as the Ultimate Metaphysics” (PhD diss., Drew University, 1938).

have cared to do so if they had. Because both Coleridge and evangelicalism have recently only become of significant interest for overlapping groups of scholars, there has not been the opportunity to bring the depth of good research from both areas to bear on each other. The inertia of having interpreted Coleridge as *not* an Evangelical, or the received position that Coleridge became a generic, orthodox Anglican (or as Cragwell states, a descent into an “uncompromising Calvinism”<sup>617</sup>) – even if such a category did not really exist – provides a significant explanatory power for why this question has not been raised in a meaningful way.

Additionally, while I believe Coleridge’s Evangelicalism is more obvious than most would have until now admitted, this does not mean my argument has no ambiguities or idiosyncrasies that will eventually need to be addressed at greater length. Early evangelicalism was not inherently anti-intellectual, but it is also not without reason that it developed such a reputation. True, important scholars were associated with this movement, and Ward has done a good job of showing that the intellectual leaders were sophisticated and competent scholars if not always their generations’ greatest minds. Nevertheless, evangelicalism developed cultures often more prone to anti-intellectualism than other contemporary religious movements. One could use this to see Coleridge as even more marginal in evangelicalism than has been explained here; however, it does not *ipso facto* preclude Coleridge from being part of this group. Indeed, his association with evangelicalism gives the movement’s second generation an intellectual figure that Ward did not believe existed. It also helps explain why greater nuance is needed to understand the “evangelical” features of some of Coleridge’s thought (for instance, his atonement theory). A stronger criticism would be that Coleridge did not maintain the asceticism associated with Evangelicals, particularly when it came to the kinds of art and entertainment that

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<sup>617</sup> Cragwall, *Lake Methodism*, 122.

Evangelicals avoided. I do not think this is an insurmountable challenge; Coleridge had developed relationships with these artistic communities that pre-dated his serious, but extended, conversion. Just as Newman, who was himself influenced by Coleridge, deserves to be considered a great Roman Catholic (as well as Anglican) thinker despite his not having adopted a stock Catholicism upon his entry into the Catholic Church, neither should it be expected that Coleridge would have adopted a stock Evangelicalism.

No matter how idiosyncratic Coleridge may have been as an Evangelical, it seems that there is one point that must remain always in mind – one drawn from Ward’s work on the intellectual history of early Evangelicalism. He starts his first chapter by saying that “Evangelicals, in the Anglo-Saxon sense of the word, seem generally to have found it easier to recognise each other than others have found it to categorize them.”<sup>618</sup> Evangelicals seemed to have had a capacity to recognize kindred spirits, whatever their idiosyncrasies may have been. Thus, one of the greatest clues to Coleridge’s Evangelical identity may be as simple as Hannah More’s observation to Wilberforce of the depth of Coleridge’s understanding of Evangelical religion and his penetrating insight into Robert Leighton.

The final point that could be raised is that this argument draws upon work that Coleridge wrote over an almost twenty-year period, or nearly one third of his life. If I am making the more tempered claim that Coleridge by his death became an Evangelical, why should one accept that his earlier work was equally applicable to the later thinker? First, I believe that there is more than enough to still demonstrate that Coleridge was embracing some form of Evangelicalism in his writings from 1820 onward. Coleridge’s relationship with Ervine, his *Aids to Reflection*, *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, his engagement with Southey’s *Wesley*, many of his relevant

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<sup>618</sup> Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 6.

notebook entries, and the *Opus Maximum* all form a significant body of my evidence and all come from the 1820s and after. Second, though, I think that this claim points to the eventual need to more fully reconstruct Coleridge's spiritual and intellectual biography. This current work does not provide the room for this full treatment, but I will try now to give the broad outlines of what it would probably look like.<sup>619</sup>

Beyond attempting to show the lines of causality in terms of Coleridge's intellectual and spiritual development, this outline will also bring into question three explicit and one implicit sets of interpretations/assumptions that often inform Coleridge scholarship. The explicit are that one can think of a clear "return" to the Church of England that coincides with Coleridge's avowed return to Trinitarian orthodoxy; that what Coleridge returned to was a generic Anglicanism imparted to him by his father; and that one can conceive of distinct and almost discontinuous phases in Coleridge's thought. The implicit idea, and one that is oriented more toward those who have begun to engage with Romanticism and Methodism/evangelicalism, is that among the first major British Romantics (Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Blake), Coleridge did not have any strong childhood family association with Methodism or the larger Evangelical Revival.

One is almost certainly struck with the sense that my argument rings hollow if Coleridge never actually had any contact with Evangelicals. Now, clearly, as his letters from the mid-1810s indicate, he encountered Anglican Evangelical ideas and by at least the mid-1790s he had become familiar with popular Methodism. But the standard interpretation of Coleridge's childhood Anglicanism would mean that he would have had limited exposure to evangelicalism

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<sup>619</sup> I think that if anything such a reconstruction strengthens my argument and paints a picture whereby Coleridge's increasing engagement with the Church of England corresponded to developments in his thought that make him appear closer to not just *Anglicanism* but *Evangelical Anglicanism*

in his early life. Barth only says about Samuel Taylor's father John that he was "a sound if unimaginative Church of England clergyman," assuring that Samuel Taylor received "early and thorough exposure to orthodoxy."<sup>620</sup> Beyond noting that Samuel Taylor spoke relatively little about his father other than saying that he was "no first-rate Genius" but still a "first-rate Christian," Richard Holmes states that John Coleridge was an accomplished scholar, well received in his community, and "no Anglican Radical."<sup>621</sup>

Granted, even if one accepts this standard reading of Coleridge's childhood religious background, it is likely that he still had an indirect childhood exposure to Methodism. Devonshire saw a jump from eight to seventeen parishes mentioning Methodist circles from 1764 to 1779 and by 1789 the Wesleyan Methodists had three circuits in the county.<sup>622</sup> However, a new monograph, *Coleridge's Father*, which seeks to give a much more thorough, independent, and scholarly examination of John Coleridge, develops a picture of a man who, if not himself a Methodist or early Evangelical clergyman, at least sympathized with the movement. In the 1750s, John Coleridge's essays in the *Gentleman's Magazine* "publicly attack rationalists and generally avoid enthusiasts," and it is unlikely that he would have been unfamiliar with associations between Methodism and enthusiasm.<sup>623</sup> This is not only because he would have known the literature of the time, but also because he was ordained by Bishop George Lavington, one of Methodism's most vociferous opponents.<sup>624</sup> Unlike his predecessor at St. Mary's, Ottery,

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<sup>620</sup> Barth, *Christian Doctrine*, 1.

<sup>621</sup> Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (New York: Viking, 1990), 1.4.

<sup>622</sup> Arthur Warne, *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century Devon* (Plymouth, UK: Latimer Trend & Company Limited, 1969), 126.

<sup>623</sup> J.C.C. Mays, *Coleridge's Father: Absent Man, Guardian Spirit* (Bristol, UK: The Friends of Coleridge, 2014), 249.

<sup>624</sup> Mays, *Coleridge's Father*, 324.



John Coleridge did not attempt to break up Methodist itinerant preaching, and “held his peace” when John Wesley preached in the market house September 4, 1776 (when Samuel Taylor would have been four years old).<sup>625</sup> John Coleridge did not report in his 1779 visitation returns the twelve parish members who had joined the Methodist societies, an action which may indicate a positive disposition toward the movement at a time when such reporting formed part of episcopal attempts to monitor or stamp out Methodism. At the same time, John Coleridge made arguments “on behalf of settled forms of worship, in chapels and groves if not in temples (that is, certainly not in fields),” he preferred “argument which appeals to analysis and comparison (not to feeling), to traditional belief (not ‘enthusiasm’),” and found many supporters for his circulated publications among those in the larger evangelical movement who did not directly associate with the Wesleys.<sup>626</sup> While the degree to which John Coleridge positively presented Methodist or evangelical ideas as his own is uncertain, he maintained an openness to Methodism and his ideas were well received by clergy who would be considered the predecessors to the later moderate Anglican Evangelicals.

Coleridge very likely had multiple opportunities to encounter evangelical ideas while at Christ’s Hospital from 1781-91 before going to Jesus College, Cambridge. While the school was part of the Anglican establishment and not a hotbed for early evangelical or Methodist activity, from 1787 onward, Beilby Porteus, a bishop already described as having Evangelical sympathies without himself being an Evangelical, became the bishop of London. This likely meant that the church hierarchy would not have promoted active hostility toward Methodism at Christ’s Hospital and would not have dissuaded sermons with evangelical themes while Coleridge

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<sup>625</sup> Mays, *Coleridge’s Father*, 325.

<sup>626</sup> Mays, *Coleridge’s Father*, 325.

attended. Moreover, Coleridge points to an incident in the *Biographia* that may indicate direct exposure to the Wesleys' works. In a tale told to Gillman about his extracurricular activities at Christ's Hospital, Coleridge describes inadvertently bumping into a gentlemen while lost in an adventure of his imagination; after convincing the man that he was not a pickpocket, the gentleman purchased him a subscription to the lending library near King street.<sup>627</sup> If Coleridge truly read through the entire library's holdings (as he claimed), then he would have read Charles Wesley's two volume *Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture*, John Wesley's *Collection of moral and sacred poems*, some of John Wesley's polemical works, and William Cowper's poems.<sup>628</sup>

Coleridge's public Unitarian beliefs began in 1794, having gone up to Jesus College, Cambridge in 1791, and having finished a stint in the army under the pseudonym Silas Tomkyn Comberbache.<sup>629</sup> He wrote to his brother George to say that he had come to be in a "kind of *religious Twilight*" with a faith made up of "the Evangelists and the Deistic philosophy" (CL I 79). His radicalism seems to have its roots, as it does for many students even today, in exposure to radical Enlightenment philosophy, and this religious twilight grew into a more explicit Unitarianism after his return to Cambridge. However, Coleridge's views between this time and his 1805 repudiation of Unitarianism were not static. Coleridge began struggling with his Unitarian theology well before 1805 and it seems that in this period he not only encountered Methodist and evangelical thinking, but that it likely played a role in shaping his intellectual and spiritual life.

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<sup>627</sup> Holmes, *Early Years*, 2.4.

<sup>628</sup> *Catalogue of the Circulating Library at No. 39 King Street, Cheapside*, hand written note indicates the catalogue current as of 1787.

<sup>629</sup> Holmes, *Early Years*, 54; 58.

Coleridge's dissatisfaction with Unitarian thought seems to have yielded some appreciation, if ambivalently, for Methodism between September and November of 1799. This is when he noted "Socinian Moonlight – Methodism &c A Stove! O for some Sun that shall unite Light & Warmth" (CN I 467). However, Coleridge's exposure to and wrestling with the Revival's theology go back several years before this statement. Coleridge wrote in a letter to Thomas Poole on February 6, 1797 that "I never yet read even a Methodist's 'Experience' in the Gospel Magazine without receiving instruction & amusement" (CL I 303). What is important about this statement is not only that Methodist conversion narratives seem to have played some role in providing a model for his own autobiographical work<sup>630</sup>, but also that Coleridge was reading the Gospel Magazine with some degree of frequency. The Gospel Magazine, founded by Augustus Toplady, was the principle vehicle for the promotion of Calvinist Methodism and the refutation of Arminian Methodism, and included articles from early Anglican Evangelicals such as John Newton. Coleridge used Newton's *Authentic Narrative* as one of his source inspirations for "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and his language of Socinian Moonlight and the Methodist Stove points out that he may have been reading more deeply in Newton's letters. The "Rime" was composed between 1797-8, indicating that he was reading Newton as he was taking inspiration from the Gospel Magazine. He also spoke of the "divine Chit chat" of William Cowper's poetry in a letter to William Thelwall from December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1796 (CL I 279). All these elements point to Coleridge having been invested in various Calvinist Methodist forms of thought around late 1796 and early 1797.

This link between the "Rime" and some interest in Calvinist evangelical thought strengthens Robert Penn Warren's interpretation of the poem, namely that it has as a theme

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<sup>630</sup> This was the introduction to the first of five autobiographical letters he wrote to Poole.

wrestling with an origin of moral evil going beyond the explanations of social conditioning, redemption, and an ultimate return to God.<sup>631</sup> Being based on an evangelical conversion narrative only strengthens this theme of fall and redemption. Charles Lamb's letter to Coleridge from January 5, 1797, in which he recalled that Coleridge was "talking of the Origin of Evil as a most prolific subject of a long poem," adds further evidence for this interpretation.<sup>632</sup> Coleridge went on to confess a year later (March 10, 1798) that

I believe most stedfastly in original Sin; that from our mothers' wombs our understandings are darkened; and even where our understandings are in the Light, that our organization is depraved, & our volitions imperfect; and we sometimes see the good without wishing to attain it, and oftener wish it without the energy that wills & performs — And for this inherent depravity, I believe, that the Spirit of the Gospel is the sole cure (CL I 396).

What is important is that, after having shown an interest in and engagement with various vehicles for evangelical thought, by 1798 Coleridge was describing his views on original sin in a way that would have resonated most with evangelicals and looks very unlike Unitarian optimism.

Some engagement with evangelical thought very likely occurred while Coleridge was reformulating his thinking about evil and sin, and this can probably stand on its own to show that Coleridge was influenced by evangelical ways of understanding his experience. If one asks whence comes this break with Unitarian thinking, it seems correct that "the obdurate fact of his own experience" stood in the way of Coleridge's ability to continue uncritically accepting Priestly and Hartley as guides.<sup>633</sup> In early 1796, Coleridge experienced a string of economic and personal hardships. Moreover, amid severe anxiety over a publisher's deadline, he caught a terrible eye infection for which he was prescribed laudanum, which he found "soothed both

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<sup>631</sup> Robert Penn Warren, "A Poem of Pure Imagination," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ed. J.D. Boulger (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969), 24-5.

<sup>632</sup> Charles Lamb, *The letters of Charles Lamb, with a sketch of his life* (London: Edward Moxon, 1889), 61.

<sup>633</sup> Warren, "Pure Imagination," 25.

physical pain and mental worry.”<sup>634</sup> While there was not yet a medical conception of addiction, Coleridge had in fact become addicted to opium, and even at this early stage Coleridge seems to have had some sense this fact.<sup>635</sup>

Personal life experience may explain the *cause* of his troubling of the Unitarian waters, but one could still ask why Coleridge came to interpret his experience in evangelical terms. One possibility is that he reached back either to possible evangelical influences brought into his home from his father or based on his having encountered this sort of language in his personal reading at Christ’s Hospital. It is also possible that he was pointed in this direction by William Wordsworth while collaborating on the *Lyric Ballads*, given that Wordsworth came from an evangelical family.<sup>636</sup> While all of these are possible, and some are likely, partial explanations, I believe there is another, more immediate link in the causal chain. In early January of 1796, Coleridge set out on a “hectic five week subscription-gathering tour of the larger Midland towns and cities” in order to distribute subscriptions to *the Watchman*, a periodical meant to help finance the Pantisocratic enterprise.<sup>637</sup> Among the groups in which Coleridge sought subscriptions were the Dissenting communities, including Unitarians, Quakers, and Methodists.<sup>638</sup> This trip did not make him hostile toward Methodists; he spoke favorably about them in the “Introductory Essay” to the first issue of the *Watchman* published on March 1, 1796, describing Methodism as one of the best means of cultivating a sense of compassion for the poor,

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<sup>634</sup> Holmes, *Early Years*, 111.

<sup>635</sup> Holmes, *Early Years*, 111.

<sup>636</sup> Although given Wordsworth’s own ambivalence to the tradition he was raised in, it is likely that if this happened it was more owing to Wordsworth’s having known about Newton’s *Narrative* and offering it to Coleridge as source material and then Coleridge having taken the initiative to dig deeper into Newton’s work.

<sup>637</sup> Holmes, *Early Years*, 107.

<sup>638</sup> Holmes, *Early Years*. 107.

indignation against their oppressors, and a love of liberty (CW 12-13). There is little doubt that Coleridge attended some worship services with those who were at least friendly toward evangelicalism, since he describes at least one instance where “after church, in the evening, they sat round and sang hymns so sweetly that they overwhelmed me” (CL I 178). The “they” who were singing were a certain Mr. Martin Barr and his children, and, while Barr was part of a mixed Congregationalist/Baptist congregation, he appears to have been evangelical in outlook since he was a founding member of the Worcester Evangelical Society.<sup>639</sup> This Evangelical Society was founded to “encourage evangelical preaching in destitute towns and villages, to promote the instruction of the poor and ignorant, especially children, by the establishment and assistance of schools and good books.”<sup>640</sup> It is likely that Coleridge encountered evangelical preaching and teaching in hymns sung, sermons preached, and conversations with members of Methodist and other evangelical dissenting groups.

The real importance of this discussion, though, is not that Coleridge did not return to orthodox theology first through the adoption of Trinitarian thought, but from a conviction of original sin and salvation by grace. A letter from 1802 clearly indicates that this was the progression of his re-conversion to orthodox Christianity. He stated that “on the subjects of the original corruption of our Nature, the doctrines of Redemption, Regeneration, Grace, & Justification by Faith my convictions are altogether different from those of Drs Priestley, Lindsey, & Disney — neither do I conceive Christianity to be tenable on the Priestleyan Hypothesis” (CL I 821). At the same time, Coleridge was still affirming that his thought “as far

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<sup>639</sup> Robin Whittaker, “Tourist, tradesman — or troublemaker? Coleridge’s visit to Worcester, 1796,” *Coleridge Bulletin*, 21 (Spring 2003), 50.

<sup>640</sup> From *Worcester Evangelical Society*, quoted in William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Worcester* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, & Co. Ltd., 1897), 218

as regards the Doctrine of the Trinity is negative Unitarianism — a non liquet concerning the nature & being of Christ — but a condemnation of the Trinitarians as being wise beyond what is written” (CL I 821). Thus, he was moving away from Unitarianism at this point as regarded the question of the nature of Christ, and he had not yet come to be able to accept the Trinity, but he was firmly opposed to the Unitarian understanding of salvation.

There does not appear a good reason to doubt Coleridge’s description in the *Biographia* of a return to belief in the doctrine of the Trinity via first being convinced of its metaphysical validity and only then of its religious importance. It also seems that the despair he felt during his time in Malta over his continued opium use, his unrequited love for Sara Hutchinson, and the coldness in his marriage with Sarah Coleridge (Fricker) drove him to seek an even firmer foundation of grace as he continued to see in himself even less of a capacity to extricate himself from his situation. As Barth points out, there was an increasing number of insistent entries in Coleridge’s Notebooks in late 1804 and 1805 in which he cried out for God’s mercy. These entries at times call on the power of the Spirit of God, so it is possible that the return to Trinitarian thought as a religious truth was born out of his sense that only the Divine Spirit could save.<sup>641</sup> However, it is less clear that Coleridge’s “adherence to the Church of England was complete and unswerving” from the time that he returned to Trinitarian orthodoxy, as Barth contends.<sup>642</sup> Barth can point to instances in both 1808 and 1820 where Coleridge wrote of having been zealously subject to the Church of England.<sup>643</sup> In the same article, though, Barth points out that Coleridge attended services very infrequently from 1805 to 1816 and then only slightly more

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<sup>641</sup> Barth, “Church of England,” 264.

<sup>642</sup> Barth, “Church of England,” 265.

<sup>643</sup> Barth, “Church of England,” 265.

frequently while living at Highgate from 1816 until his decision to re-commune in 1827. It is possible, as Barth describes, that this was merely the result of a distance between Coleridge's belief and practice and that his failure to commune until so late was from either the cultural norms of infrequent communion or out of his own sense of deep unworthiness.<sup>644</sup>

Both points are possible and I do not think that the position I put forward excludes them in their specifics. However, I think it plausible that these were lower motivating reasons and that Coleridge's return to the Church of England was not nearly as certain and unwavering as Barth contends. I think that these two statements can at least be tempered somewhat either as attempting a greater show of public adherence to the church or of a mind oscillating between positions, because one can look to other statements that indicate uncertainty about allegiance to the Church. In the month before Coleridge finally re-communed, he wrote an entry in which he proclaimed uncertainty about what church he could remain with, and he ultimately believes the Moravians may be the most faithful:

Am I or is the non-existence of a Christian Community, in fault?—God knows how much I feel the want of Church Fellowship! But where can I find it? Among the *Methodists*? ~~How can I call you Britons? Only~~ ~~in~~ *Vide* the Cuts & Frontispieces to the Methodist, Arminian, Evangelical &c Magazines. ~~Among the~~ *The Quakers*? —I want heart of Oak—& here is *the Rind* and Bark in wondrous preservation, counterfeiting *a tree* to the very life! —. *The C. of Eng?* — the Churches, and Chapels? O yes, I can go to <a> Church, & so I can to a Theatre—& go out again —& know as much as my fellow-goers in the one as in the other — The Moravians? — If any where, among them (CN V 5636).

While Coleridge seems to have eventually resolved his conscience in the direction of the Church of England, this entry reflected an ongoing conflict he had that prevented him from fully returning to the Church of England through full participation in the community. If one avoids assuming that he was merely rationalizing his own infrequent worship attendance, one sees in Coleridge the feeling that the Church of England did not represent authentic Christian community because it did not sufficiently distinguish itself from popular culture. Alternatively,

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<sup>644</sup> Barth, "Church of England," 272-3



or relatedly, one can see Coleridge's conflict with his fellow Anglicans as resulting from their ecclesial participation going no deeper than a sense that passive attendance, as one would at a theatre performance, sufficed for proper religiosity. In other words, Coleridge did not find sufficient "seriousness" in his fellow Anglican church-goers.<sup>645</sup>

I would offer an alternative hypothesis for Coleridge's relationship to the Church of England and church-going practices that takes account of the frequency of attendance at worship and his continued reservations even up to the few months before he finally re-communed in the Church: As Coleridge wrestled with Trinitarian orthodoxy, he would have known that there existed other Christian groups that accepted this doctrine beyond the Church of England; given a strong aversion to the Church of England during his commitment to Unitarianism, any acceptance of the Church of England, especially early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, would have more likely only been undertaken with significant reservations. Given these reservations, one may plausibly also expect that Coleridge would have entertained joining a Dissenting community that allowed him to follow the beliefs he was coming to embrace without having to return to the Church of England. While he may have declared himself part of the Church of England, particularly from the period of 1805-1816, this seems to have been more like a fallback *if* his searches did not yield what he was looking for.

Coleridge's living with the Gillman's at Highgate after 1816 gave him greater impetuosity to give the Church of England a chance, although he probably resigned himself to not finding any other existing community that would give him room for the beliefs and practices he came to embrace. More importantly, though, this move to Highgate followed his great spiritual crisis, his

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<sup>645</sup> This likely also puts the last nail in the coffin of Coleridge having been affiliated with High Churchmanship. The sense of unworthiness and infrequent communing *could* possibly give some indication that he was inclined toward High Church sacramentality, but it seems very unlikely that a High Churchman, who would have seen the *necessity* of institutional mediation, would wrestle with whether the Church of England was true Christian community.

finding solace in Leighton, and his encounters with the Anglican Evangelicals Hannah More and Thomas Methuen. It is likely then that Coleridge began to gain a sense that there was a community within the Church of England with whom he could find great spiritual affinities (hence his claim that his creed was much closer to that of Methuen's and the sense that the Evangelical clergy really were saving the Church; it may be that they were not only saving it institutionally but saving it also for *Coleridge* himself). After going to Highgate, he developed a close relationship with the rector of the local Church, Samuel Mence, and they conversed more frequently than Coleridge attended services. His interest in Irving in the early 1820s and then his ultimate parting of ways with him over theological concerns could possibly be Coleridge once more having his hopes stoked of an option other than the Church of England only to resign himself in disappointment again that only the Church of England offered the capacity for his religious beliefs. This would then track with a trajectory in which Coleridge came to speak with increasing favor about the Church of England, albeit still with the undercurrent of uncertainty that came through in his November 1827 statement of internal conflict. Coleridge's return to communion with the Church of England at Christmas, 1827 would represent his complete return to the Church of England.

While there is no room to go into deep description of it, there is significant evidence to incline one toward something like the reconstruction I presented above. To begin with, James Vigus has written that Coleridge started to take an interest in the Quakers from 1799 onward after his engagement with William Law, Jacob Böhme, and George Fox, without ever being able to bring himself to join the modern Quakers. His problem stemmed from his acceptance of the intellectual system of the early Quakers and a sense of discontinuity between the system that

he read about and the beliefs and practices of his contemporary Quakers.<sup>646</sup> Despite all of this, Coleridge continued to attempt building bridges with the Quakers, and the fact that he named his periodical *The Friend* in 1808 was an attempt to attract Quaker readership.<sup>647</sup> If the period of 1797-8 was a first stage in Coleridge's long conversion, it makes sense that he would turn to the Quakers in 1799, the same year that he describes seeking the union of Methodist warmth and Socinian light. One gets the impression that he found something in his experience of Calvinist (and likely Arminian) Methodism lacking in Unitarianism, but at this point they went too far to the opposite extreme, meaning that Methodism would not have, at this stage, been open to Coleridge.

It is interesting, then, that one sees Methodism reemerging as a significant theme in his writing as he began to speak with greater negativity about the Quakers and during his first significant affirmations about affiliation with the Church of England. In 1808, Coleridge stated that "I say aloud everywhere, that in the essentials of their faith I believe as the Quakers do," except that he cannot bring himself to accept their "*notion and practice*" (CL 3 156). This echoes a similar statement that he made in his critique of Sedgwick, namely that Sedgwick went wrong in attacking the Methodists on their doctrine, which conformed to that of the Church of England and was the point on which they were (in Coleridge's estimation) correct, when what should have been attacked was "their practices, their alarming Theocracy, their stupid, mad, and mad-driving Superstitions" (CM IV 657-8). In addition, he gives several indications here that he felt

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<sup>646</sup> Jame Vigus, "Informal Religion: Lakers on Quakers," in *Informal Romanticism*, ed. James Vigus (Trier: WVT, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2012), 100-102. Dissonance between the greatness of founding figures and contemporary manifestations of their movements is a recurrent theme in Coleridge. One sees it not only with the Quakers, but also with Calvinists (the hyper Calvinists are for Coleridge his "modern Calvinists" who would not have been recognized by Calvin himself), and even philosophical movements (he sought to distance the Latitudinarians, whom he rejected, from the Cambridge Platonists, whom he held in high esteem [see CM I 358]).

<sup>647</sup> Vigus, "Informal Religion," 105.

the lumping of all Methodists together unfair, since there were legitimate differences between the Calvinist and Arminian Methodists, and one may even detect a sense of greater defensiveness toward true Calvinist Methodists. Against the claim that the doctrine of election or justification by faith alone leads to immorality, Coleridge contended that “the Calvinist Methodist are the austerer and more watchful Censors of the two [branches of Methodism]” (CM IV 647).

Interestingly, one finds at this same time a dramatic uptick in the number of notebook entries that Coleridge makes from January to April 1809 regarding Methodism in which he seems to struggle with the movement’s merits and deficiencies.<sup>648</sup> This interest died down and then reemerged again in 1810, starting with Coleridge’s problems with the moralistic and consciously un-Methodist preaching in Church of England pulpits (CN III 3790) and continued with various struggles with literature about Methodists (CN III 3900), problems with their doctrine of perfection (CN III 3901), and even the positive affirmation that along with Theresa of Avila, representing pious Catholicism, Whitfield represented pious Calvinism and Wesley and John Fletcher represented pious Arminianism (CN III 3907).

Now, Coleridge was in part researching Methodism at this point to help Robert Southey in his increasing interest in the movement and in John Wesley in particular. However, that Coleridge would provide the same final critique of the Methodists as of the Quakers, seem to hold the Calvinist Methodists in higher esteem (something that continues through the rest of his life), and show such a sustained interest for two years, indicates that he was not so assured about the status of the Church of England. It is telling also that Methodism and Quakerism represent the two ecclesial groups that Coleridge rejected in the November 1827 notebook entry. This was not merely him running through the list of Christian churches in England at the time. Were it just

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<sup>648</sup> Cf. 3466, 3486, 3490 CN III

a matter of ticking off the checklist, one would expect to see at least Unitarians (even if he no longer considered them Christian, which would seem to be what his grounds for rejection would have been) and Baptists, since Coleridge had engaged in correspondence with John Ryland, a prominent Baptist minister in Bristol, in 1807<sup>649</sup> and because, in addition to Mence, Coleridge had developed a relationship with E. Lewis, the pastor at the Baptist Church in Highgate. This is to say nothing of Coleridge's *apologia* for infant baptism in *Aids to Reflection* written with a real Baptist friend in mind. One is left then with the sense that the groups Coleridge lists in this entry were ones that he had at least at one time seriously considered or ones he still could not resolve his doubts about.

The final piece that helps to make the case for my proposed chronology is Coleridge's relationship with the Rev. Samuel Mence, who became the schoolmaster at Highgate in 1816. Little is published about Mence's views outside of Coleridge's descriptions, but if Coburn and Christensen, the editors of Coleridge's fourth volume of Notebooks, are correct that Coleridge is referring to Mence as the Neighbor Minister designated N,<sup>650</sup> then Coleridge describes Mence in a way very similar to how one would describe an Evangelical minister. Coleridge says about him that he was "a man of deep yet stern mind, which has been formed & colored by the study of the earliest Reformers & those Divines, who by the name of Puritan adhered to the Bishop of Edward IV & Elizabeth in opposition to the learned but less Anti-Romansh Prelates and Doctors who obtained the Rule of the Church during the Stuart Dynasty" (CN IV 5398). Furthermore, he "clings to the articles & Homilies – but feels scrupulous and uneasy at some part of the

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<sup>649</sup> For his engagement with Ryland, see Timothy Whelan, "Coleridge, Jonathan Edwards, and the 'edifice of Fatalism,'" *Romanticism* 21, no. 3 (September 2015): 280-300.

<sup>650</sup> See Notebooks IV.2, 555. The note uses the letter "M," which would make sense for Mence, but in the actual entry itself, the letter used is "N," although this could be a printing error.

Liturgical Offices” (CN IV 5398). If this is the case, then Coleridge, having just had several important encounters with Anglican Evangelicals in 1814-15, would continue his journey toward greater acceptance of the Church of England in direct conversation with an Evangelical.

This chronology needs to be more fully explored and collated with greater precision to Coleridge’s published works, events in his life, and events in the world around him, but even this short outline provides a compelling case that Coleridge’s movement toward a *full*, rather than nominal, adherence to the Church of England, did not come until later in 1827. Furthermore, it indicates that Coleridge’s “conversion” began well before his acknowledged return to Trinitarian orthodoxy, and that it began with possibly *the* definitive evangelical doctrinal emphasis, viz., conviction of original sin and depravity and the need for God’s redemptive grace through Christ. One also sees a continuity from Coleridge’s early adult life, when he seems to have come under the influence of Cowper, Newton, and other Calvinist evangelicals and his later affinity for the more Calvinist Anglican Evangelicalism.

This argument for understanding Coleridge as an Evangelical is meant not only as a help for intellectual historians, but also as a foundation for further constructive use of Coleridge. In this way, it has both a positive and a negative function. Positively, Coleridge offers possibilities for the development of an authentic Anglican theology, as well as pointing toward solutions to certain issues inherent in contemporary theological discourse. The negative, corrective function that this reading offers is that it challenges the interpretation that John Milbank applies to Coleridge to enlist Coleridge as a resource for Radical Orthodoxy. One of the main sources for understanding Milbank’s engagement with Coleridge comes from his article “Divine *Logos* and Human Communication: A Recuperation of Coleridge,” and the subtitle is telling; there is some final gesturing toward the possibilities Coleridge’s thought can offer to contemporary thinkers,

but the purpose of this essay seems more to fashion an interpretation of Coleridge's thought that will make him acceptable for later use. Milbank essentially offers a Coleridge amenable to Radical Orthodoxy, but he can only do this, it seems, by taking advantage of certain ambiguities located more properly in the interpretive tradition rather than Coleridge's work itself. Ultimately, an understanding of Coleridge as an Evangelical helps to explain as central certain features of Coleridge's thought that Milbank seeks to mark off as disposable, and it shows that certain of Milbank's conclusions are only possible by employing works as emblematic of "stages" of Coleridge's development that were not necessarily Coleridge's most thorough or representative treatments of those subjects. This gives the impression that Milbank is "proof-working"<sup>651</sup> Coleridge's opus to create a version of Coleridge amenable to his own project, but not necessarily a portrait that is fair to what Coleridge himself thought.

Milbank argues that the shape of Coleridge's life provides a trajectory from his early "Unitarian Christian Socialism, through an idealist justification of liberalism, to a critique of liberalism on Christian Trinitarian grounds" and that this represents "an astonishing trajectory across three major types of 'political theology' within English tradition."<sup>652</sup> In line with Milbank's larger project, he attempts to show that the inability to challenge the political and economic problems of modernity result from opposition to liberal orders that "turn out to be only liberalism after all."<sup>653</sup> Milbank places Kant squarely within the "liberal" tradition; because Coleridge clearly was influenced by, or made positive use of, Kantian and other German idealist philosophical language and categories, Milbank has to demonstrate that Coleridge transcended

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<sup>651</sup> I.e., Milbank selects the works from Coleridge's corpus that best serve his purpose or prove his interpretation of the shape of Coleridge's thought just as one may pull out "proof-texts" from a single work.

<sup>652</sup> Milbank, "Divine *Logos*," 22-3.

<sup>653</sup> Milbank, "Divine *Logos*," 24.

these Idealist commitments to be of any use in this larger project. Milbank describes his periodization of Coleridge's thought as "three integrated phases," but it appears that he actually needs Coleridge to have these three phases in a more discrete and detachable way whereby Coleridge begins in a "biblically based political radicalism" followed by a middle period "lapse into political conservatism that coincides with his conversion to Kantian Idealism" and finally a "resurgence of a political biblicism in an altered form."<sup>654</sup> While Milbank believes that this last stage represents the most important (in his reading, Coleridge at this time accepts an absolute metaphysics, Christian orthodoxy, and the grounds of critiquing the liberal order), precisely because "liberal Capitalism" is placed as the central point upon which Coleridge can offer a position of opposition, Milbank seems to think of Coleridge's early "Christian socialism" as a kind of *sui generis* Christian socialism that was radical even for its own time and worthy of admiration as well. This laudatory character comes from Milbank seeing Coleridge's thinking at this early stage as not actually the result of Enlightenment, but instead coming "from the 'underground' survival of the ideas of the Levellers and Diggers" that led him beyond an Enlightenment view of equally shared private property to the elimination of private property all together.<sup>655</sup> Early on Milbank signals a desire to show that Coleridge's "authentic" or "core" thought can be separated off from a kind of Enlightenment ephemera.<sup>656</sup>

The overall structure of Coleridge's thought presented in this work may still allow one to see definite stages of Coleridge's intellectual and spiritual development. However, it is either not the fall/return journey that Milbank puts forward, or the location of the "fall" and point of

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<sup>654</sup> Milbank, "Divine *Logos*," 3.

<sup>655</sup> Milbank, "Divine *Logos*," 5.

<sup>656</sup> For all Milbank's critiques of Coleridge's descent into a Kantian dualism, he apparently has no problem employing a kind of quasi-gnostic separation between Coleridge's stated thinking and sources and the "hidden" *real* sources of his ideas.



“repentance” do not allow for the periodization that Milbank needs. In terms of his religious life, Coleridge’s move away from Unitarianism began much earlier than is normally thought (in 1797 or 1798), and it was his struggling with the question of evil, not the speculative metaphysical problems of Unitarianism, that led to his gradual and stepwise abandonment of his Priestlian/Hartlian theology and philosophy. While Coleridge certainly changed his mind after 1797 on certain key philosophical points, this intellectual trajectory appears more like a unified progressive conversion toward Evangelical Anglicanism as he gradually clarified his own position. Various thinkers have challenged the idea that Coleridge experienced a “conversion” to Kantian thought that marks a clear break with earlier thinking. For instance, Hedley argues that Coleridge was not so much perpetuating German Idealism as such, but sought to “employ ideas from German Idealism in order to revive an anthropology and theology of the Cambridge Platonists and other philosophical mystics.”<sup>657</sup> Coleridge repurposed Idealist language to convey in a contemporary idiom ideas from authors who seemed “positively antiquated in their methods and interests in the 1820s.”<sup>658</sup> While I disagree on the specifics of Hedley’s thinking<sup>659</sup>, his insight seems largely correct that Coleridge was not seeking to merely promulgate German Idealism in England. This line of thinking follows Stephen Prickett’s interpretation, which sees even in Coleridge’s appropriation of Hartley and Priestly the attempt not to merely parrot other philosophies, but a lifelong attempt to find adequate philosophical language to express his own developing intellectual insight. Speaking specifically about Coleridge’s use of Idealist language for the imagination, Prickett states that Coleridge was “constantly struggling to articulate what he

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<sup>657</sup> Hedley, *Philosophy and Religion*, 12.

<sup>658</sup> Hedley, *Philosophy and Religion*, 13.

<sup>659</sup> I think that his interest in early Reformation thought means that he was attracted to a generally Augustinian Platonism in which Cambridge Platonism could play a part.

already knew, existentially, in his own experience,” and when he used other people’s systems of thought, it was “insofar as they served to illuminate his feelings of joy or dereliction – and if they did offer an insight into these conditions of his creativity, their compatibility was irrelevant.”<sup>660</sup>

This earlier conversion timeframe meant that Coleridge did not so much convert to Kantianism as Kant provided him the philosophical language to help express his conversion. If this challenges the schematization that Milbank puts forward by questioning how much it is proper to say that Coleridge “converted” to Kantianism, then a critical look at the “emblematic” works that Milbank uses to provide his periodization further challenges his schema. On the front end, there is no problem with Milbank’s choice of using the *Lectures on Revealed Religion* as indicative of Coleridge’s early political-philosophical-theological thought. From here, though, Milbank makes choices that seem strange, to say the least. Including *The Friend* as part of what could be a “middle stage” for Coleridge certainly seems chronologically correct, but if one were to look to a work that is *emblematic* of Coleridge’s Kantian/Idealist stage, one would think it more natural to turn to the *Biographia Literaria*, the work that has garnered the most attention from scholars because of legitimate claims that Coleridge *plagiarized German idealist philosophy*. However, the problem with using the *Biographia* is that it was published the year *after The Statesman’s Manual* (and the first lay sermon most guides Milbank’s thought).<sup>661</sup>

One could argue that the continued use of German Idealism in the *Biographia* does not in and of itself show that Coleridge maintained a kind of Kantian *political liberalism*, so Milbank’s use of *The Friend* could still be defended insofar as it was not necessarily an intentional attempt to select works that create his chronology rather than truthfully representing Coleridge’s

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<sup>660</sup> Prickett, *Coleridge and Wordsworth*, 78.

<sup>661</sup> The *Biographia* was published July 1817 and *The Statesman’s Manual* was published in December 1816.

intellectual development. Things begin to look more dubious when you see how Milbank grounds his understanding of the function of the Bible for Coleridge. One would expect that in describing how Coleridge understood the Bible, Milbank would make copious use of *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. However, he only makes one reference to this work.<sup>662</sup> One may see *why* Milbank would avoid *Confessions* when one sees what understanding of the Bible Milbank wants to attribute to Coleridge. Milbank argues for Coleridge's "non-foundationalism" through the assertion that Coleridge saw the Bible as an "irreplaceable store of archetypes" that "alone is able to 'explain' its own textual being and the being of all subsequent texts that it has generated."<sup>663</sup> Milbank flattens the world "behind the text" with the world of the text for his understanding of Coleridge's Bible, saying that "the point here is not that the Bible is a poetic record of real events, but rather that it is an account of primitive events which had to take place poetically, that is to say were instantiated in poetic writing."<sup>664</sup> For Milbank's Coleridge "the Bible is *the text*" and "there is an implicit anti-foundationalism in Coleridge's placing of textuality at the origin."<sup>665</sup> What is troubling about this is that it side-steps the great lengths that Coleridge goes to in *Confessions* *not* to reduce the Bible to the text. Coleridge did reject the Bible as constituting objective evidence for faith, but he also did not see an encounter with the Bible, serving as its own self-interpreting expression of the divine Logos, as the foundation of faith either. Rather, one comes to appreciate the divine origin of Scripture precisely because there is a logically prior conversion experience that opens one to seeing the Spirit speaking through Scripture. Reducing the Bible to the text is *precisely* Coleridge's reason for rejecting

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<sup>662</sup> Milbank, "Divine Logos," 19n29.

<sup>663</sup> Milbank, "Divine Logos," 20.

<sup>664</sup> Milbank, "Divine Logos," 18.

<sup>665</sup> Milbank, "Divine Logos," 20.

plenary inspiration because it removes the human element *behind* the text. The Bible in *Confessions* is exemplary, showing the working of the Spirit in the lives of real believers, but it cannot be archetypal precisely *because of* this function. To be archetypic would be to remove the individuality of those who Coleridge believes truly, historically existed and because of this particular historical existence can serve as examples for contemporary faith. Furthermore, Coleridge was clear that he did believe that the divine origin in Scripture is in the events recorded – and *not only* the recording – thus accepting a distance between the world of history behind the text and the world of the text.

The problem with Milbank’s attempt to make of Coleridge a thinker whose “implicit critique of Kant is that the possibility of human meaning is tied not to *a priori* categories, but to contingent, historical, linguistic constructions,” is that it requires Coleridge to have moved from an acceptance of Kant and idealism to a rejection of that same philosophical idealism. However, Milbank’s chosen texts seem intentionally curated to fit his vision of what *he* needed from Coleridge rather than what Coleridge actually thought. Beyond the texts described above, Milbank makes no reference to either *Aids to Reflection* nor to the *Opus Maximum*, which, while fragmentary and not published, was available when Milbank wrote his article. While these works, especially the *Aids to Reflection*, are critical for understanding Coleridge’s developing thought, they at the same time pose a problem for Milbank’s argument that Coleridge rejected a “Kantian stage.” The discussion of reason and understanding which forms the core of Coleridge’s Kantian inspired psychology in *Aids to Reflection* reflects similar points in *The Friend*. Ultimately, rather than providing a description of Coleridge’s actual intellectual development or thought, Milbank appears to have created a Coleridge who anticipated Milbank’s own commitment to a kind of radical linguistic constructivism. Paul DeHart said in his

conclusion to *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy* that “meanings have been continually foisted upon the texts that they cannot bear, and the radically orthodox Aquinas that emerges from their pens is (reluctantly as it must be admitted) largely a work of fiction. Better to avoid this exercise in destroying the village in order to save it.”<sup>666</sup> Unfortunately, this seems to be the case not only for the Radical Orthodox Aquinas, but also for the Radical Orthodox Coleridge.

Even if Milbank is more egregious in trying to claim Coleridge in *toto* (or in *parte* at least) as having put forward roughly the same philosophical bearings as contemporary Radical Orthodoxy, he is not the first person to have appropriated Coleridge’s thought for his or her own purposes. Newman in the generation after Coleridge found inspiration for his understanding of the relationship between faith and reason in Coleridge’s conception of understanding and reason. Maurice and other architects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Broad Church movement took Coleridge’s political vision of the Church and his understanding of the Church’s capacity to encompass multiple viewpoints as a launch pad for their own proposed schema of relatively flexible interpretations of doctrine and an emphasis on the ambiguity of the liturgy to hold together a variety of theological and liturgical forms in one Church.<sup>667</sup>

This observation points toward the second, positive way for how this understanding of Coleridge can prove fruitful for contemporary theology. If my interpretation is correct, Coleridge sought to provide a more thoroughly philosophical understanding of Evangelical Anglican thought while also being able to provide partial inspiration for the other two main theological traditions to come out of 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglicanism, viz., Oxford Movement High Churchmanship and the middle of the road Broad Church movement. With this being the case, Coleridge acts as

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<sup>666</sup> Paul DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 2014), 188.

<sup>667</sup> See Charles Richard Sanders’s *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1942).

a kind of pivot figure not only between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Anglican theology but also between the three main forms of Anglican liturgical-theological style that persist until the present. This points to the possibility of more theological cohesion between these branches, and, insofar as Coleridge's theological thought was forged in dialogue with Calvinist *and* Wesleyan Methodist thought, with contemporary Methodist and Wesleyan churches. The robust nature of Coleridge's theology, even though it maintains a certain Evangelical "practicality" points furthermore to the possibility of a truly and distinctly *Anglican* theology, rather than the much more common theology done by Anglicans (but actually originating in continental, and mostly German, thought) or the tendency to reduce Anglican "distinctness" as an ecclesial tradition to shared liturgy.

Of possibly greater importance is that Coleridge presents the contemporary reader of his thought with the merging of a certain Pietistic and a certain Enlightenment impulse that one can see winding through modernity. Both impulses appear thoroughly modern, so long as modernity is not conceived as fully convertible with "Enlightenment." That Coleridge was so rooted in his Evangelical (and British) tradition, more so than many other early 19<sup>th</sup> Romantic and Evangelical thinkers, provides insight into a way forward past some of the problems bequeathed to the present by the post-Kantian turn in philosophy. Coleridge can provide a vision of theology that does not neglect the turn toward history or subjectivity. At the same time, with Coleridge's rooting in the classical Augustinian tradition, he can avoid the pitfalls that occurred in German Idealists like Hegel and Schelling, at least so long as one desires to maintain a traditional doctrine of God rather than some kind of process or pantheist scheme.

Coleridge's understanding of the Trinity and what it means for the relationship between God and the world presents one of his most intriguing contributions, and I believe this part of his

work can resolve certain problems or impasses at play in contemporary constructive/systematic theology. Theology in the last two centuries, in the wake of dealing with the rapid scientific, philosophical, cultural, and technological changes associated with modernity, has seen the pre-modern intellectual foundations, and assumptions, of so much Christian doctrinal exposition thoroughly unsettled. The Renaissance, Reformation, and Scientific Revolution all challenged the sources of authority and the views of the cosmos that allowed these traditional Christian theological concepts to stand secure, both in their formal scholarly expositions and as popularly held and believed. This unsettling introduced radical skepticism into the world through the very act of unsettling and as it was codified and elaborated in figures like Descartes and Montagne. As the rationalism of the Enlightenment failed to overcome this doubt and it was exacerbated and elevated to axiomatic status in thinkers like Hume and then Post/Late-Modern philosophy and critical theory, it has become an unavoidable and often overwhelming challenge for contemporary philosophy and theology. The radically new scientific conception of the human, the cosmos, and history combined with this doubt have meant that theology has had the difficult task not only of making sense of concepts like a non-static, evolutionary/developmental view of natural and human history and the overwhelming immensity of the universe – to say nothing of the incredible suffering, cruelty, and marginalization these changes have made possible – but it has had to do so while in a state of epistemic free-fall.

While the last 20-40 years have seen theology focus on the epistemic side of this question, particularly in its preoccupation with method, the last 200 years have really been a history not so much of progression in theological thinking as the ebb and flow of either reconstructing Christian doctrine to meet the challenges of a contemporary worldview or of answering the question of how theology can be epistemically justified at all. Theologies of

people like Karl Barth and the Barthian tradition (broadly conceived) may offer solutions to the epistemic question, but they often do so by removing theological discourse from connection with other areas of human knowledge and (as with Postliberalism) going round and round a fideistic cul-de-sac in which it seems impossible to rise above prolegomena about the bare possibility of Christian belief to actually begin expositing doctrine in a meaningful way.<sup>668</sup> On the other hand, thinkers and movements like Hegel, American Process Theology, and Moltmann present systematic accounts of doctrine that attempt to meet paradigm shifts in history and the natural and social sciences, but they often do so while requiring the acceptance of deeply unsettling conclusions or departures from historic Christianity significant enough to wonder whether they actually constitute breaks rather than transformations.<sup>669</sup> Finally, whether they come in a sophisticated philosophical garb, as is the case with Radical Orthodoxy, or in the much ruder clothing of Fundamentalism, attempts to simply circumvent these intellectual and societal transformations seem the least plausible and satisfying solutions to issues facing contemporary theology. Just as the splitting of the atom has meant that the nuclear genie (or demon) cannot be put back in its bottle, neither does it seem that we can ever un-view the world in terms of deep time, an evolutionary cosmos, and the relativity of culture and history.

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<sup>668</sup> Because the main point of this dissertation is not to critique trends in 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> century theology, I offer my summary of the problems I see in the theologies I here put forward, but I am unable to provide a thorough argument for these analyses. Thus, I hope the reader can at least accept that even if the exact figures to which these problems are attributed do not exactly match the scheme I provide, these are indeed problems that one encounters in modern thought. *If* these actually prove to be problems with contemporary theology, then hopefully this sketch can point to the ways that Coleridge may provide solutions. Of course, if one accepts the situation as I present it but does not feel troubled in the way I do, then my sense of Coleridge's potential contributions means very little.

<sup>669</sup> It seems almost unnecessary to repeat that there are, at the very least, significant problems with Hegel's concept of the dialectic of history. Likewise, most Process Theology cannot maintain eschatologies or doctrines of God that bear much resemblance to the Christian tradition, and they often do so while moving God to the same metaphysical order as creation and thus prove no more capable of answering ultimate cosmological questions than agnostic and atheistic scientific materialism. Moltmann, in so strongly rejecting "traditional theism" and proposing a "self-limiting" God may end up with many of the problems of both Process Theology and Hegelian philosophy, and both he and Pannenberg may even require an acceptance of tritheism – highly problematic given that almost the entire Christian tradition has sought to show that the Trinity does not undue its fundamental claims to monotheism.



Back, then, to Coleridge's possible contribution and how his understanding of the Trinity and creation address many of these issues: Coleridge presents a view of the human intellect such that the Divine Word grounds what is distinctively human and our subjectivity and rationality are only ever a gracious gift; this allows him to both acknowledge the gratuity of revelation and knowledge of God that someone like Barth seeks without destroying a real recognition that humans *can* actually know something about God and the world through human rationality. That the Trinity proves to be the ultimate ground, pattern, and possibility of unity between God and the world while also functioning as that which prevents the world from being subsumed into God allows one to move past someone like Hegel's problematic views of history. Coleridge could accept a certain true insight in the view that something about the unfolding of human history corresponds to the nature of God; however, for Coleridge this has more to do with the continual striving and failing of humans to recognize and live into the true structure of the world that is the analogue to the Trinity than with the world being the necessary unfolding of God's self-realization. Because God is self-sufficient and can thus provide a truly gratuitous creative love, Coleridge can actually maintain a true sense of *creation* and *distinction* between God and the world that Hegel, in making the world a *necessary* part of God's self-realization, likely cannot. Because the unfolding of history is not only the natural human striving to realize its created purpose of union with God, but is in significant ways the result of a sinful human failure to realize that telos, Coleridge can offer a developmental view of the world and history that accommodates Rahner's or de Chardin's sense of the world moving toward union with God without the diminished emphasis on human sin and evil in history accompanying these latter thinkers. Because the Trinity provides the pattern for all created reality, and this pattern permeates all levels of creation, one can move beyond an either/or thinking in the debates

between Social and non-Social Trinitarians; one need not ask whether it is the individual human mind *or* human society that evinces the Image of God in Creation because *both* fulfill this function in different and important ways. Finally, Coleridge can affirm with Schelling the primacy of Will in God, allowing for a dynamism in God's being instead of the more static view that classical Platonic theism is often charged with engendering. However, by seeing Will *qua* Will as necessarily coterminous with intellect, Coleridge can maintain a Christian concept of a personal God in contrast to Schelling's more emanationist view of the ultimate foundation and source of the world as beyond personality and distinction.

This is not to say that Coleridge is perfect; there are certainly critiques that can be made of his boarder-line gnostic sense that embodiment in the material world as it is now is a result of the fall (even if it is a more positive, restorative result than Karl Barth's logic in the *Römerbrief* that moves in the direction that creation *is* fall). Coleridge never could finish his final synthesis of all knowledge through the Logos as creative principle, but it is possible that this incompleteness is as much opportunity as it is detriment. The problems Coleridge faced as he saw them were greatly under appreciated in his time, particularly in a Britain that scoffed at or viewed suspiciously Coleridge's preoccupation with metaphysical problems. It may be, then, that one should look at Coleridge's incomplete work as itself a representation of the union of warmth and light that he found in the Church of England: imperfect, but nevertheless offering one of the best opportunities for thinking through and living the Christian life that is available to those who have come after him.

## APPENDIX

From the *Canones Synodi Dordrechtanæ* (*Canons of the Synod of Dort*)

Primum doctrinæ caput, de divina prædestinatione.  
(First Chapter of Doctrine, concerning divine predestination)

Articulus Primus. (First Article.)

Cum omnes homines in Adamo peccaverint, et rei sint facti maledictionis et mortis æternæ, Deus nemini fecisset injuriam, si universum genus humanum in peccato et maledictione relinquere, ac propter peccatum damnare voluisset, juxta illa Apostoli, *Totus mundus est obnoxius condemnationi Dei*. Rom. iii. 19. *Omnes peccaverunt et destituuntur gloria Dei*. Ver. 23. Et, *Stipendium peccati mors est*. Rom. vi. 23.

(Since every human has sinned in Adam, and by this act brought about condemnation and eternal death, God would have caused no one an injury if God had wished and leave the whole human race in Sin, and condemn [them] on account of Sin, just as those things said by the Apostle, *the whole world is liable to the condemnation of God* Rom. 3.19. All have sinned and have been cut off from the glory of God. Ver. 23. And, *the wages of sin are death*. Rom. 6.23)

Tertium et Quartum Doctrinæ Caput, de Hominis Corruptione, et Conversione ad Deum ejusque Modo.

(Third and Fourth Chapters of Doctrine, concerning the Corruption of Humanity, and the Return to God and its way)

Articulus Primus. (First Article.)

Homo ab initio ad imaginem Dei conditus vera et salutari sui Creatoris et rerum spiritualium notitia in mente, et justitia in voluntate et corde, puritate in omnibus affectibus exornatus, adeoque totus sanctus fuit; sed Diaboli instinctu, et libera sua voluntate a Deo desciscens, eximiis istis donis seipsum orbavit: atque e contrario eorum loco cœcitatem, horribiles tenebras, vanitatem, ac perversitatem judicii in mente, malitiam, rebellionem, ac duritiam in voluntate et corde, impuritatem denique in omnibus affectibus contraxit.

(A human was constituted in the beginning in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and advantageous conception of his Creator and of spiritual things, and with uprightness in the will and heart, and with purity in every affection, and all this to such a degree as to be completely holy. But falling away from God by the instigation of the Devil and from his own free will, [the human being] has by his own doing deprived himself of these very special gifts: and brought about from that opposite place blindness, terrible darkness, vanity, and a perversion of the capacity for judgement in the mind, malice, rebellion, and obduracy in the will and heart, and thereupon impurity in all the affections)

II. Qualis autem post lapsum fuit homo, tales et liberos procreavit, nempe corruptus corruptos; corruptione ab Adamo in omnes posteros [solo Christo excepto] non per imitationem [quod Pelagiani olim voluerunt], sed per vitiosæ naturæ propagationem, justo Dei judicio, derivata.

(The human being was in such a state after the fall that this corrupt one truly certainly brought into being corrupt children; with this corruption having been derived from Adam in all who came after [except Christ alone] not through imitation [which the Pelagians at one time preferred], but propagated through a nature full of vice, by the just sentence of God)

III. Itaque omnes homines in peccato concipiuntur, et filii iræ nascuntur, inepti ad omne bonum salutare, propensi ad malum, in peccatis mortui, et peccati servi; et absque Spiritus Sancti regenerantis gratia, ad Deum redire, naturam depravatam corrigere, vel ad ejus correctionem se disponere nec volunt, nec possunt.

(Accordingly all human beings are conceived in sin, and are born children of wrath, unfit for every beneficial good, with a propensity to evil, dead in sin, and slaves to sin; and without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit, they neither want to nor can return to God, restore [their] depraved nature, or dispose themselves to its restoration)

From the “Articles of Religion” in 1662 Book of Common Prayer<sup>670</sup>

9. “Of Original or Birth Sin”

ORINIGAL sin standeth not in the following of *Adam* (as the Pelagians do vainly talk) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the off-spring of *Adam*, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth Gods wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek φρόνημα σαρκός, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of it self the nature of sin.

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<sup>670</sup> The Church of England, *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 676.

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