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Providence and Progress: Richard Price's Idea of Progress

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PROVIDENCE AND PROGRESS • REYNOLDS

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PROVIDENCE AND PROGRESS:
RICHARD PRICE'S IDEA OF PROGRESS

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the idea of historical progress of the eighteenth-century English theologian and revolutionary thinker Richard Price. Although Price has received only passing notice in the standard histories of the belief in progress, the popular English philosophe made a significant (and in some respects unique) contribution to the history of the eighteenth-century idea.

Price was one of the most illustrious members of a small circle of English progressives--all Christian thinkers--which also included the Anglicans David Hartley and William Paley and the Unitarian Joseph Priestley. These writers gave the idea of progress a strongly spiritual (Christian) imprint missing in the standard secular French formulations of the belief. Of these English theorists, none has suffered more from the neglect of past histories than the Unitarian Price. Except for an occasional reference in a scholarly article, no full-scale study has been attempted on Price or the other members of his circle. This study analyzes Price's idea of progress, emphasizing in what respects he held ideas in common with

the predominant French school from Fontenelle to Comte, and in what ways his conception made significant departures from that interpretation.

While Price's earlier writings provided the intellectual foundation for his idea of progress, the most comprehensive statement of his belief was contained in an essay, The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement in the State of Mankind (1787). While the standard works appear not to have known of the existence of this essay, Price's contemporaries--most notably the Marquis de Condorcet--knew of and admired the work. It was probably from a reading of the Evidence, that Condorcet affirmed that Price was one of the most illustrious apostles of the eighteenth-century belief in progress. What emerges from a reading of this essay is a distinctively Christian interpretation that breaks with the standard French idea of progress.

From whatever vantage point Price's idea is examined, the essential Christian features are apparent. In his view past history was little more than the record of a grand progress controlled and directed by divine Providence, which for the Unitarian minister would culminate in what Christians understood as the Millennium. The strong spiritual dimension of Price's belief broke with the narrow eudaemonist theories of the French, anticipating the

spiritual progressivism of the German school from Lessing to Hegel.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The intellectual climate of western civilization since the first world war has been permeated with a deep sense of anxiety and despair. Avant-garde leaders in all areas of thought--from historians like Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee to theologians like Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr--seriously question whether twentieth-century man has the inner resources to survive. Three of the most significant novels of the twentieth century, George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, Arthur Koestler's The Age of Longing, and C. Virgil Gheorghiu's The Twenty-Fifth Hour, mirror this spirit of anxiety and dread in western culture.

Various writers have attempted to classify the spirit or Zeitgeist of the twentieth century; others feel that there is no common spirit that characterizes the epoch. At times it has been called the "Age of Crisis," at other times, the "Age of Anxiety," and one contemporary historian has called it the "Age of Disappointment."[1] Whatever label is

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[1]W. Warren Wagar, Good Tidings: The Belief in Progress from Darwin to Marcuse (Bloomington, 1972), p. 204.

used, many contemporary thinkers are agreed that the optimism that characterized the nineteenth century, is missing in the age of total war, totalitarianism and the bomb. "Lord of all things, he [man] is not lord of himself."[2] According to one writer, to "grasp the meaning of modern godless man's plight" is to pass through the "awful sense of depression that accompanies a real insight into man's condition."[3]

The most striking aspect of the contemporary intellectual climate is its anarchic condition, which for some, parallels the early decades of the nineteenth century. Warren Wagar argues that the orientation supplied to advanced thought in antiquity by Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, in the Middle Ages by Augustinian faith, and in the Age of Reason by the Newtonian synthesis, has no counterpart in the twentieth century.[4] Franklin Le Van Baumer states that the spirit of hope and progress that pervaded the previous century's thought-world has been dissipated by the experience of this century. Compared with

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[2]José Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses (New York, 1932), pp. 47-8.

[3]Roland Stromberg, European Intellectual History Since 1789 (New York, 1968), p. 224.

[4]W. Warren Wagar (ed.), Science, Faith and Man: European Thought Since 1914 (London, 1968), p. 1.

the "day-light world" of the nineteenth century, the twentieth century lives in a "night-time world," a world of anxiety.[5]

The optimism of the bourgeois century rested on a faith in reason, science and human progress. Of these beliefs, none was so widespread, or its influence so pervasive, as the modern idea of progress. Historians generally have traced the origins of the belief to the seventeenth century; the ancient and medieval world, they state, developed no true theory of progress. However, the scientific accomplishments of the "Age of Genius," which had raised great hope for scientific advancement, implied that the same "scientific" techniques could be used to bring about the general social progress of society.

The standard works argue that the first theory of intellectual progress, which was a prerequisite for a theory of general progress, was formulated by the French scholastic Bernard de Fontenelle in the seventeenth century. In his classic study, The Idea of Progress (1920), J.B. Bury affirmed that it was Fontenelle to first

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[5]Franklin Le Van Baumer (ed.), Main Currents of Western Thought (New York, 1965), p. 587. Van Baumer (in introductory essay to part III) calls the twentieth century the "Age of Anxiety," anxiety defined as a "state of mind combining loneliness of spirit with a sense of loss of control," (also p. 587).

"formulate the idea of the progress of knowledge as a complete doctrine."[6] From this point, the doctrine of progress evolved and expanded into the comprehensive theories of the Marquis de Condorcet, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer. It was in the middle decades of the nineteenth century that the belief took on the guise of a new faith, replacing the traditional Christian hope of other-worldly bliss. Nearly all the creeds that dominated the "bourgeois" century--Positivism, Hegelianism, Marxism, Darwinism--embodied in some sense the doctrine of progress. A Frenchman, A. Javary, writing in 1851, stated, "If there is any idea that properly belongs to our century, it is, as it seems to me, the idea of progress, conceived as a general law of history and the future of humanity."[7]

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to establish a workable definition of the belief in progress. There is absolutely no "one, true, gold-plated" idea of progress, and where the "lines are to be drawn" is difficult to decide.[8] This study is not concerned with "progress" in the morally neutral sense, such as to progress

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[6]J.B. Bury, The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry Into its Origin and Growth (New York, 1932), p. 110.

[7]A. Javary, De l'Idée de Progrés (Paris, 1851), p. 1.

[8]W. Warren Wagar, "Modern Views of the Origins of the Idea of Progress," Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. XXVIII, no. 1, January-March, 1967, pp. 69-70.

from place to place; nor is it concerned with "progress" in the popular sense of technological or material progress. Also, it is not concerned with just one kind of progress, such as religious progress, economic progress, or intellectual progress. The idea of progress that will be examined here is a quasi-religious theory of history; it is the view, outlined by George Boas and Arthur Lovejoy, that the "course of things since the beginning--despite possible minor deviations and the occasional occurrence of backwaters in the stream of history--has been characterized by a gradual increase, or a wider diffusion, of goodness, or happiness, or enlightenment, or all of these."[9] Furthermore, it is proposed that this course of improvement will continue indefinitely into the future.

The belief in human progress is essentially a speculative idea, a faith in history, deriving from what one historian calls the "impulse to invest life with a unifying purpose or meaning beyond the urgencies of everyday existence."[10] In looking at the modern idea of progress, we are looking at one of the "great ideas", an idea like Providence or the soul. To study the development of this

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[9]Arthur Lovejoy and George Boas (eds.), Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore, 1935), p. 3.

[10]Wagar, Good Tidings, p. 7.

doctrine in the eighteenth century, is to return to a time when philosophers and historians believed that human history had direction, an ultimate destiny. Such speculative theories of mankind are out of fashion in the twentieth century and--with the exception of historians like Toynbee and Spengler--have all but disappeared from serious historical discourse.

Any study of the idea of progress must necessarily begin with J.B. Bury's classic The Idea of Progress (1920), a book still recognized as the standard work on the subject. Most of the standard histories of the Enlightenment written in the 1920's and 1930's were written in the shadow of Bury's magnum opus; none seriously dissent from either his definition of progress or his discussion over the origins of the belief. Although since World War II, there has been increasing criticism of Bury's thesis--in particular by Christian thinkers such as John Baillie, Karl Lowith, and Reinhold Niebuhr--Bury's book still dominates the field.[11]

While Bury's detractors agree with him that the idea of progress has become untenable in the twentieth century, they criticize Bury for not realizing the extent that

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[11]Cf. John Baillie, The Belief in Progress (London, 1950), Karl Lowith, Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History (Chicago, 1949) and Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History: A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History (New York, 1949). For a lengthy discussion of the controversy over Bury's interpretation of origins, see Wagar, Journal of the History of Ideas, cited earlier on page 4.

the belief in progress derives from the Christian world view. Where Bury regarded the idea as a purely modern notion, the result of the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, these Christian critics believe it only a secularized version of Christian eschatology.

Bury defined the idea of progress as the view that "civilization has moved, is moving, and will move in a desirable direction."[12] This definition is similar to the one expressed on page 4 of this paper; however, there is one crucial difference--for Bury added that progress must result entirely from what he called the "psychical and social nature of man."[13] The idea, defined in this manner, would rule out any appeal to Providence or a supra-historical agency as the source of progress. Yet, some of the most impressive ideas of progress produced in the Enlightenment, conceived progress in these spiritual or metaphysical terms. Though individual thinkers might interpret this spiritual force differently--at times calling it divine Providence and at other times Universal Reason and Absolute Spirit--all were convinced that the course of history was under the direction of

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[12]Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 2.

[13]Ibid., p. 5.

an unseen power greater than themselves. Bury's narrow definition limited his study primarily to French social thinkers, for they more than others, interpreted the idea of progress in his secular terms. As a result, Bury's history of the development of the idea, while a magnificent effort, is essentially a history of the French concept of progress--with little mention of progressive currents outside of France.

While historians generally agree that the Enlightenment had its most lively career in France--and that it was from there that such beliefs as the idea of progress were most widely disseminated, the movement was German, Scottish, Italian and English as well as French. To view this movement in intellectual history as a purely French phenomenon, is to miss some of the most vital and refreshing streams of eighteenth-century thought. There were many national variations of a common theme, and it was not very long before the Enlightenment and the belief in progress spread outside of France.

One country which Bury treated very lightly was England, devoting only a single chapter to a circle of English progressives that included Edward Gibbon, William Godwin and Joseph Priestley. At the same time, Bury gave whole

chapters to Condorcet, Fontenelle, the Abbé Saint-Pierre and two full chapters to Comte. Because of his narrow definition of the belief, Bury's history had less scope than it might have had he accepted a more inclusive definition. Bury seems to have been unaware of the widespread influence of the idea of progress within the English intellectual classes--but more crucial than this, his secular connotation of the idea prevented the English historian from examining the writings of a significant circle of Christian thinkers who developed some of the most comprehensive expressions of the eighteenth-century belief.

Little delay attended the reflection of the idea in English thought, and, by far, the most enthusiastic formulations came from the circles of English Christianity. These Christian progressives--some of them the most respected leaders of thought and opinion in eighteenth-century England--constitute a distinct English school of progress that contrasts in significant ways with the predominant French school from Fontenelle to Comte. From the eighteenth century forward, they gave the belief in progress a strong spiritual imprint missing in the secular French interpretations.

Among the most illustrious members of this Christian circle were the Anglicans David Hartley and William Paley

and the English Dissenters (Unitarians) Joseph Priestley and Richard Price. In respect to their political views, all but Paley were known for their "radical" sympathies--in particular Priestley and Price who were strong supporters of both the American and the French Revolutions. One leading historian of the eighteenth century, classifies Price, Priestley, and other radical Dissenters, as leading the struggle for political reform in their time.[14] While the Dissenters opposed the violent stages of both revolutions, they were the most avid English enthusiasts of those events.[15] Because of their support of the French Revolution, both Price and Priestley were given an enthusiastic welcome in France (Priestley being made an honorary member of the French National Assembly).

Of the principal members of the English school of progress, Price and Priestley enjoyed the greatest international reputation, counting among their friends the most respected leaders of thought and opinion in England, France and America. However, while Priestley has received

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[14]Carl Cone, The English Jacobins (Lexington, 1960), p. 10. Cone is a leading authority on the Dissenters--in particular Price. He believes Price was much more important than historians have recognized.

[15]R.C. Cobb also emphasizes "radical" nature of dissenting politics. Cf. Cobb, "The English Jacobins and the French Revolution", The Eighteenth-Century Revolution, French or Western (Boston, 1963), p. 25.

some attention in the standard histories of progress, Price, regarded by Condorcet as one of the first apostles of progress in eighteenth-century Europe, has received only passing notice. Bury, himself, gave Price only one line, referring to the English thinker as a progressive who "occasioned the Government no little alarm."[16]

While the standard histories credit the first formulation of the idea of human perfectibility to Saint-Pierre, Condorcet gives that distinction to Turgot, Priestley and the little known English progressive Richard Price. In his classic Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind, Condorcet makes the following affirmation:

> Finally we see the rise of a new doctrine which was to deal the final blow to the already tottering structure of prejudice--the doctrine of the indefinite perfectibility of the human race of which Turgot, Price and Priestley were the first and most brilliant apostles.[17]

The possible influence of Price on the classical representative of the eighteenth-century belief poses some intriguing questions for the intellectual historian. This problem will be discussed at a later point in this paper; for the present, it can be stated that Price played a much

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[16]Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 224.

[17]Antoine-Nicholas Condorcet, Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind, trans. Jane Barraclough (New York, 1955), p. 142.

more important role in the history of the idea of progress than historians have recognized.

With the exception of scattered articles in scholarly journals, no full scale study has been done on either Price's idea of progress, or the English school, of which he was one of the major representatives. This is primarily due to the fact, that up to present, both studies of progress and the Enlightenment have tended to center on France, with just passing mention to England, Germany, or other countries. The most recent book on the Enlightenment, Peter Gay's The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, has been criticized for its overly French bias. Hans Kohn has attacked Gay for over-emphasizing the role of the French philosophes in a highly cosmopolitan movement. According to Professor Kohn, it was not France, but England in the first period and Germany in the second period, that were the most creative centers of the European Enlightenment.[18]

The classic studies on the history of progress reflect this same French bias. Jules Delvaille's celebrated study, Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de progrès jusqu'à la fin du XVIII' siècle (1910), the longest work on the

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[18]Hans Kohn, "The Multidimensional Enlightenment," Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. xxxi, July-Sept., 1970, p. 468.

subject, J.B. Bury's The Idea of Progress (1920) and Dean Inge's The Idea of Progress (1920), are essentially histories of the French concept of progress, with only slight mention of progressive thinkers outside of France. In addition, the two most recognized studies since World War II, Charles Frankel's The Faith of Reason and R.V. Sampson's Progress in the Age of Reason, also display a considerable French bias. The most recent studies on the idea of progress, Warren Wagar's Good Tidings: The Belief in Progress from Darwin to Marcuse and Sidney Pollard's The Idea of Progress, while moving outside of France, spend little time on the Enlightenment conception of progress.[19]

No English progressive has been more neglected because of the preoccupation with French theorists than Richard Price. It was because of this neglect of a thinker, recognized by a leading French philosophe as one of the first apostles of human perfectibility, that this study of Price's idea of progress was undertaken. It is the purpose of this study to examine the English thinker's conception of historical progress, and to demonstrate both in which respects his idea was in the mainstream of Enlightenment progressivism,

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[19]Cf. Charles, Frankel, The Faith of Reason: The Idea of Progress in the French Enlightenment (Philadelphia, 1969), R.V. Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason: The Seventeenth Century to the Present Day (Cambridge, 1956), Warren Wagar, Good Tidings: The Belief in Progress from Darwin to Marcuse (Bloomington, 1972) and Sidney Pollard, The Idea of Progress (London, 1970).

and in which respects it marked a significant departure from that tradition. It is argued that, while in certain respects Price's idea shared common features with the predominant French school of progress from Fontenelle to Comte, it contained unique features that separated it from that tradition. It was these unique or original characteristics of Price's theory (discussed in detail in chapter four) that represented Price's most original contribution to the eighteenth-century idea of progress and his chief claim as a significant progressive thinker.

The following is a brief outline of the chapter break-down of the dissertation. Chapter I begins with a brief overview of the history of the belief in progress as traced by Bury, then moves on to a discussion of the recent controversy over the origins of the idea and concludes by introducing Price's idea as a representative example of the English School of progress. Some preliminary observations are offered on Price's conception in preparation for a detailed examination in later chapters. Chapter II focuses on Price's dissenting heritage. The first part gives a brief overview of the history of Protestant Dissent, the second discusses Price's early nonconformist environment and the third discusses Price's role as a leading minister of Dissent from 1743 to his death in

1791. It is the thesis of this chapter that Price's idea of progress derived in great part from his dissenting background, that his conception was consistent with his early and later religious experiences. Chapter III focuses on the Christian underpinnings of his idea of progress. Particular attention is paid to Price's belief in Providence as the source and guarantor of man's progress; it was this belief that most separated the English divine's conception from the standard French formulations of the belief. Chapter IV centers upon Price's vision of the final destination or end of man's progress. The issue of the "end" of progress is a major one discussed in progressive writing, and Price offered an unusual interpretation of this problem. Like his conception of Providence, his vision of the last age derives from his Christian Weltanschauung. This chapter also introduces Price's unique conception of human perfectibility, his most important contribution to eighteenth-century progressive thought. Chapter V offers some observations on the relation of the American Revolution to Price's theory of human progress. The Revolution played an important role in this context, and the chapter examines at some length this subject. The study concludes with some final observations on the findings of the preceding five chapters, attempting to evaluate Price's role in the Enlightenment.

CHAPTER I

RICHARD PRICE AND THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF PROGRESS

This opening chapter is divided into two parts; the first part gives a brief introduction or overview of the history of the idea of progress through the eighteenth century as sketched in Bury's classic account, The Idea of Progress. In order to examine Price's own conception of progress it is necessary to place the English clergyman in his proper historical context. The second part offers several preliminary observations on Price and the English school--of which he is a prominent representative--in preparation for a more detailed analysis of Price's interpretation in a later chapter.

Bury argued that the idea of progress was essentially a modern notion--a direct consequence of the revolution in science during the seventeenth century. Most of the standard works on the Enlightenment do not seriously dissent from Bury's interpretation. However, since World War II, Christian scholars like Karl Lowith and John Baillie have subjected Bury's thesis to a searching criticism--and they

may rewrite the history of the belief. Bury's critics can be divided into essentially two groups: those who stress that the idea of progress existed in antiquity and those who criticize Bury for not realizing the extent that the modern doctrine is a "bastard offspring" of the medieval Christian world view. Of the first group, two of the most provoking studies are Ludwig Edelstein's The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity and Joseph Needham's Time and Eastern Man. Of the second group, the most impressive work comes from a circle of Christian thinkers, notably John Baillie, The Belief in Progress, Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History, and Karl Lowith, Meaning in History.[1] These Christian writers all agree that the idea of progress cannot be understood without a "most searching inquiry into the mind of antiquity and the Middle Ages."[2] Progress, for them, is only a secularized version of the Christian hope of heavenly perfection. Niebuhr states that a thorough examination of the history of the idea will reveal the connection between Christian and modern secular conceptions of

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[1]Cf. Ludwig Edelstein, The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity (Baltimore, 1967), Joseph Needham, Time and Eastern Man (London, 1965) and Baillie, The Belief in Progress, Niebuhr, Faith and History and Lowith, Meaning in History (cited earlier).

[2]Wagar, Journal of the History of Ideas, p. 64.

history and demonstrate that the modern gospel of progress is a misconception of the history of mankind.[3]

Bury argued that while there might have been some anticipations of the idea of progress before the modern age, that neither antiquity nor the Middle Ages produced a "true" theory of progress. The ancient view of history--revealed in the writings of philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and historians like Thucydides and Herodotus--was cyclical. The ancient mind conceived of history as an eternal repetition of growth, decay and degeneration. Marcus Aurelius spoke of a rational mind that stretched forth "into the infinitude of time", comprehending the "cyclical regeneration of things."[4]

The future, according to the ancients, would reveal nothing new; sons would endure the same cyclical patterns as their fathers--and their sons, in turn, would repeat the same cycle. Most of the standard histories have followed Bury, regarding the ancient mind in these terms. Only recent scholars like Edelstein and Needham have challenged Bury's suppositions. Although Bury saw no genuine theory of progress in ancient times, he believed

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[3]Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History (New York, 1949), p. 13.

[4]Marcus Aurelius, The Communing with Himself, trans. C.R. Haines (London, 1916), book xi, section 1, p. 10.

that groups such as the Epicureans--in discarding the theory of degeneration--had accustomed men's minds to patterns other than cyclical. However, since they were primarily concerned with life in the present--with little concern over the future--the Epicurean thinkers developed no true idea of progress.

The Weltanschauung of the Middle Ages, states Bury, was also incompatible with the fundamental assumptions that underlay the idea of human progress. Christian thinkers like Saint Augustine and Orosius accustomed men to think only in terms of a "spiritual progress" towards a final heavenly state--but since they placed no importance on the amelioration of earthly conditions, the idea of progress could not arise. For Augustine, the purpose of human existence was to prepare for the other world, and while Charles Van Doren finds an idea of progress in Augustine, it is a purely religious progress as man strives for oneness with the creator.[5] The Augustinian-Christian view of history also included a belief in divine Providence, which Bury argued was incompatible with the assumptions of the belief in progress. As Bury points out, the doctrine of Providence controlled the thought of the

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[5]Charles Van Doren, The Idea of Progress (New York, 1967), p. 81.

Middle Ages, and while it was in ascendant, no true theory of progress could emerge.[6]

Bury argued that before the modern idea of progress could arrive, certain conditions had to be met. First, there had to be a frank recognition of the value of earthly life; second, both science and philosophy had to be freed from their submission to the ancients; and third, science had to be placed on such foundations that the permanence and invariability of natural laws was guaranteed.

The first condition was fulfilled by the European Renaissance--for although the movement was many things--its most unique feature or characteristic was a new emphasis on the secular. As John Baillie writes:

> . . . the movement was many-sided and took many forms, but its distinguishing characteristic is a certain shift in the previously existing relation between men's sacred and secular interests.[7]

The men of the Renaissance, foregoing the warnings of Augustine and the early church fathers, discovered a new interest in the values of their temporal existence.

The second condition was fulfilled by the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, in particular through

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[6]Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 22.

[7]John Baillie, The Belief in Progress (London, 1950), p. 96.

the work of numerous intellectuals who demonstrated the natural equality of the moderns with their ancient predecessors. The "Debate Between the Ancients and Moderns," which raged throughout intellectual circles in seventeenth-century France, brought about a new conception of the role of the modern intellectual. The Moderns claimed that contemporary poets, writers, and philosophers, shared a natural equality with the ancients. And, because the Moderns had the accumulated knowledge of all the past at their disposal, they not only would equal, but surpass, their ancient forefathers. Furthermore, the Moderns' successors would surpass their predecessors' achievements, so that in the final analysis, today's Moderns would be tomorrow's Ancients. It was a Modern, according to Bury, to advance the first true theory of intellectual progress in western civilization. Bury writes:

> Fontenelle, then, was the first to formulate the idea of progress of knowledge as a complete doctrine. At the moment the import and far-reaching effects of the idea were not realized, either by himself or others, and his pamphlet, which appeared in the company of a perverse theory of pastoral poetry, was acclaimed merely as an able defense of the Moderns.[8]

The third condition was fulfilled also by the

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[8]Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 110.

seventeenth century--and it was the work of the mathematician-philosopher René Descartes that Bury singled out. Descartes had rationally demonstrated the invariability of natural law, an indispensable prerequisite for a theory of progress of knowledge and consequently, the general progress of society. It was Descartes, according to Fontenelle, who had introduced a "precision and accuracy" into philosophy that had been unknown in the past.[9]

Descartes had prepared the way for Fontenelle, whose classic Digression Between the Ancients and Moderns (1688), presented the first theory of intellectual progress. Picturing the human race as a child just beginning to walk, the French writer foresaw an infinite period of improvement ahead for mankind. However, while Fontenelle advocated man's intellectual progress, he had little hope over the prospects of general social progress. In the Dialogues of the Dead (1680's), the French thinker presented a very pessimistic view of human nature. While man would improve intellectually, morally he would remain the same; man's nature was basically immutable, tainted by the stain of original sin.

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[9]Bernard de Fontenelle, Diverse Works of M. de Fontenelle (La Hague, 1728), vol. II, p. 135.

While Bury credited Fontenelle with the first idea of intellectual progress, it was to Abbé Saint-Pierre, in the eighteenth century, that he attributed the first general theory of social progress. In his monumental Observations on the Progress of Universal Reason (1737), Saint-Pierre concentrated on the possibilities of the future advancement of the human race. The French thinker argued that it was inevitable that mankind ultimately arrive at a future secular utopia based on science and reason. The Abbé foresaw a future when all of mankind would make "rapid progress towards perfection"; Saint-Pierre's wording here is similar to Condorcet's in his famous tenth epoch.[10] John Baillie writes of Saint-Pierre:

> He is an optimist not only in respect of his confidence in the power of governments to bring about human happiness by legislative action, but also in believing that the time had now come when the human reason would actually begin the rapid development of its powers along this new line of advance.[11]

While Saint-Pierre expanded the theory of Fontenelle, eighteenth-century thinkers would enlarge and expand on his conception. The history of the idea of progress from the eighteenth century forward is essentially a history of

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[10]Abbé Saint-Pierre, Observations sur le progrés continuel de la raison universelle (Rotterdam, 1737), p. 180.

[11]Baillie, The Belief in Progress, p. 109.

"successively broader and more far-ranging conceptions" of the progress of mankind.[12]

While Bury's outline of the history of the idea was unquestioned until 1945, the majority of scholarship since the war has challenged Bury's interpretation of the modernity of the belief. This recent scholarship--primarily the work of Christian apologists like Karl Lowith, Reinhold Niebuhr, John Baillie and Emil Brunner--has not only rejected Bury's modern interpretation but repudiated the idea itself. Through their eyes, Bury seems "old fashioned and quaint."[13] The strong reception of their writings today is symptomatic of two trends in recent twentieth-century thought: the repudiation of the belief itself and the new seriousness towards traditional religion, both western and non-western. More and more of the leading poets, philosophers and historians are looking to traditional religion for a solution of the moral crisis of this century.

One of the major planks of these Christian scholars is that the belief in progress was based on too optimistic an appraisal of the human condition. The events of the

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[12]Wagar, Good Tidings, p. 18.

[13]Wagar, Journal of the History of Ideas, p. 61.

twentieth century--total war, totalitarianism and the bomb--have undermined faith in the doctrine of progress and at the same time reaffirmed or substantiated the Christian interpretation of man. At some points, these Christian scholars return to the Calvinist doctrine of human depravity--arguing that only by accepting the traditional Christian argument can man explain and find a solution to the "spiritual" crisis of contemporary society. This rapidly growing coterie of scholars--called by one historian the "new orthodoxy"--has sought to destroy the belief in progress by exposing its "errors and illegitimate origins."[14]

These Christian detractors of Bury were not the first to question the "modernity" of the idea of progress. As early as 1932, the eminent American historian Carl Becker had warned that the eighteenth century was "nearer the Middle Ages and less emancipated from their preconceptions" than they had ever imagined. At every turn--according to Becker--the philosophes betrayed their debt to medieval thought; they had demolished the city of Saint Augustine, only to "rebuild it with more up-to-date materials."[15]

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[14]Ibid., p. 64.

[15]Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers (New Haven, 1932), p. 31.

When he considered the eighteenth-century belief in progress, Becker believed it only a substitution for the traditional Christian hope of heaven. "Without a new heaven to replace the old, a new way of salvation, of attaining perfection, the religion of humanity would appeal in vain to the common run of men."[16]

Lowith, Baillie and other Christian critics, have followed in the footsteps of Becker and continued the assault on Bury's modern conception of progress, criticizing the English historian for not being aware of the Christian origins--illegitimate or not--of the idea of progress. Baillie argues that the belief in progress is nothing more than a Christian heresy; like all heresies, it is a lopsided growth, emphasizing the development of "one aspect of received truth" to the neglect of others. Christianity, states Baillie, has maintained itself through a balance of insight, each perception of truth "acting as a check on the too speculative and one-sided expansion of the others." Baillie continues: "As far as we can see, the doctrine could not have grown up elsewhere than on ground prepared for it by the Christian gospel."[17] For Brunner, the idea of

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[16]Ibid., p. 129.

[17]Baillie, The Belief in Progress, p. 95.

progress was no more than the bastard off-spring of Christian eschatology; the Christian gospel, so long a permanent fixture on the western landscape, prepared the west for the acceptance of the secular idea of progress.[18] Warren Wagar, a leading authority on the "new orthodoxy," argues that for these Christian writers, the belief was no more than a secularization of the Christian epic--a direct import from Christianity--and in this sense, a rape.[19]

Bury has not been without his own supporters; the attack by Lowith, Baillie and Brunner has been countered by other scholars, notably sociologist Morris Ginsberg. In his Essays in Sociology and Social Philosophy (1961), Ginsberg minimized the connection between Christian thought and the modern idea of progress, linking the growth of the latter directly to the emergence of modern science. He joined Bury in arguing that the idea of progress could not have arisen as long as the medieval conception of Providence held sway and man's attention was centered on the kingdom of heaven rather than the kingdom of the world. The modern belief was an outgrowth of the Scientific Revolution and

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[18]Emil Brunner, Eternal Hope (Philadelphia, 1954), p. 10.

[19]Wagar, Journal of the History of Ideas, p. 65.

the spread of the rationalist outlook. Ginsberg argues that the doctrine of progress, contrary to Bury's critics, is wholly separated from the Christian tradition. Catholic thinkers have had difficulty coming to grips with it and Protestant writers have not been sympathetic with it. In Ginsberg's view, to represent the modern idea of progress as no more than a secularized version of Christian eschatology, is as illogical as representing recent theologies of history as religious versions of secular utopias.[20]

Bury's critics have looked primarily at French thinkers in hopes of finding a connection between Christianity and the idea of progress. An example of this tendency has been Karl Lowith's impressive work on Condorcet. Lowith concludes that Condorcet's faith in perfectibility, which Comte found chimerical and absurd, is no more than a secularized version of the Christian idea of divine perfection. A close reading of Condorcet's writings, Lowith adds, will reveal a spirit "which can indeed be called religious" though it was consciously irreligious.[21]

One modern commentator on the idea of progress, points out that in looking for the remote beginnings of

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[20]Morris Ginsberg, The Idea of Progress: A Revaluation (London, 1953), p. 8.

[21]Karl Lowith, Meaning in History, p. 92.

the idea, one might find more direct links in the spiritual ideas of progress of the German school from Lessing to Hegel. The same thing, would hold true of the English school of progress, which also subscribed to an essentially spiritual form of the belief. The tendency in English Christian circles was to incorporate the secular idea of progress into a traditional Christian framework. The leading representatives of the English school--Hartley, Priestley, Price and Paley--regarded man's progressive improvement as the work of divine Providence.

Baillie does see a strong connection between Christian eschatology and the English idea of progress and, argues that thinkers like Price and Priestley were aware of the extent their ideas derived from traditional Christianity. Baillie writes:

> It is, however, significant that from the beginning the prevailing tendency in Britain was to regard the belief in earthly progress, not as an alternative to the traditional Christian outlook, but as a supplement to it. There were indeed a few in England who followed the French lead by working out their ideas in deliberate opposition to the Churches, but there were many more who, being well aware that their progressivism was in one of its aspects a derivative from Christian conceptions, sought rather to lead Christian thought itself in this new direction.[22]

After studying the writings of the leading members of

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[22]Baillie, The Belief in Progress, pp. 117-18.

the English school, there does not seem to be enough evidence to substantiate Baillie's thesis. However, even if they were not consciously aware of the Christian origins of their ideas, these Christian thinkers could offer valuable insights into the problems over the history of the idea.

The spiritual dimension of the English school's conception of human progress separated them from the standard secular writings of the French and brought them close to the German school from Lessing to Hegel. Like their German counterparts, the English school blended together the traditional Christian belief in divine Providence with an amalgam of rational and secular ideas. All three schools--English, German and French--belonged to a category that was progressive, but there were enough divergent features in each to regard each group as a distinct school of progress. Of the principal members of the English school, no one better exemplified their distinctive conception of progress than Richard Price. It is to Price, the principal subject of this study, that we now turn.

Price's idea of progress is contained primarily in a little known essay, The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement in the State of Mankind, published in London in 1787. The Evidence, however, was only the culmination

of a number of earlier writings that reflected Price's lifelong theological and political optimism. While these earlier writings provided the rationale for his fully articulated theory of progress, it is the Evidence that is the English theologian's major work on progress, and his chief claim as a significant eighteenth-century theorist of progress.

Earlier, it was emphasized that the predominant French emphasis in the standard works had resulted in the neglect of Price and other significant English progressives. Added to this (at least in Price's case) is the fact that until recently only a small few eighteenth-century specialists were aware of the existence of the Evidence. The longest study on the history of the idea of progress, Jules Delvaille's celebrated Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de progrés jusqu'à la fin du XVIII' siècle (1910), while devoting three pages to Price, fails to make any mention of the Evidence. Delvaille cites only from Price's ethical discourse, A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals (1758). This would imply that the French author was not aware of Price's major essay on progress.[23]

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[23]J. Lough, a noted historian of the eighteenth century, concurs. Cf. J. Lough, "Condorcet et Richard Price," Revue de Littérature Comparée, January, 1950, pp. 87-93.

If Delvaille gave Price only three pages, Bury was not that generous. In his classic work, The Idea of Progress (1920), the English historian devoted only one paragraph to Price, referring to him as an English progressive that "occasioned the Government no little alarm."[24] While Bury mentions Price's role in the American Revolution, he says little of his idea of progress and absolutely nothing of Price's Evidence. Bury's minor appraisal of Price was partly due to the fact that Price's Christian progressivism did not fit Bury's secular definition of progress. In addition since Bury failed to mention the Evidence, there is a strong possibility that the English historian was not aware of the work. Furthermore, it is known that Bury drew heavily on Delvaille's study of the English thinkers and that the latter evidently considered Price only a minor English progressive. In addition, since Bury's study is still considered the big book in the field, other scholars have accepted at face value his minor appraisal of Price and the English progressives. As a result, the contributions of Price and others of a similar stamp have not been fully recognized. Studies of the English Enlightenment have dragged behind those on the French Enlightenment; it was

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[24]Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 224.

due to this fact that this study of the Englishman Richard Price was undertaken. It is hoped that this examination of Price's idea of progress will be the beginning of further research in the English Enlightenment.

It is not in the standard histories that one finds mention of Price's idea, but in the work of a contemporary, the Marquis de Condorcet. Condorcet was the first to illuminate Price's contribution and there is a strong possibility that he may have been influenced by the English thinker. No single writer of the Enlightenment has been mentioned more than this French progressive; his monumental Outline (mentioned earlier) is still considered the classical expression of the eighteenth-century idea of progress. According to R.V. Sampson, in Condorcet, "all the streams of the Enlightenment united in a single impassioned flow."[25]

Condorcet considered Price, along with Turgot and Priestley, as an exponent of the belief in perfectibility, of which the French thinker was the most able representative. While most eighteenth-century studies acknowledge Turgot's influence on Condorcet (Condorcet acknowledged his debt to his predecessor), few realize the admiration and respect Condorcet held for the English Unitarian Richard Price.

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[25]R.V. Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason (Cambridge, 1956), p. 119.

In his classic Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind, Condorcet makes the following affirmation:

> Finally we see the rise of a new doctrine which was to deal the final blow to the already tottering structure of prejudice--the doctrine of the indefinite perfectibility of the human race, of which Turgot, Price, and Priestley, were the first and most brilliant apostles.[26]

From the above passage, it is evident that the French progressive considered Price's idea of progress a significant expression of the eighteenth-century belief. Also, since he mentions Price as a forerunner of the doctrine of perfectibility (which Price outlines in the Evidence) it is clear that Condorcet knew of the existence of Price's major work on progress. It seems natural that Condorcet knew of Price's writings considering the close bond between French and English thinkers in the eighteenth century. Lough states that Condorcet had met Priestley in the late 1780's and that the French thinker may have been introduced to Price's writings through Priestley. However, Lough found no trace of letters between Price and Condorcet in the unpublished correspondence of Price. While this is true, there is a letter from Price to Count Mirabeau asking the latter to thank Condorcet for the "valuable publication" sent to the English

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[26]Condorcet, Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind, p. 142.

minister.[27] This at least proves that Condorcet thought enough of Price to send him a gift and there is always the possibility that further correspondence between the two men will be discovered.

The most interesting problem to emerge concerning the relationship of Price to the French philosophe is the possible influence of the English thinker on the most famous eighteenth-century apostle of progress. It is a fact that Condorcet published his essay seven years after the publication of Price's Evidence. Also, since Condorcet refers to Price as an important forerunner of the idea of progress, there is a strong possibility that the French author had read the Evidence and been influenced by it. However, it is also a fact that while Condorcet did not publish the Outline until 1794, he had outlined its plan as early as 1782 to the French Academy of Science. Still there is a possibility that Price may have contributed in some way to the writing of the Outline. This problem must remain in the realm of speculation since Condorcet says nothing of Price's influence on him, while acknowledging his intellectual debt to Turgot.

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[27]Richard Price, "Letter to Count Mirabeau," in the unpublished Price correspondence, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia. Letter of July 4, 1789.

The possible influence of Price on Condorcet leads into another interesting question--the influence, if any, of Turgot on Price. Price's idea of progress bears a close resemblance to Turgot's conception and we know that the latter published his essay thirty-seven years before Price's Evidence. Price and Turgot were frequent correspondents and held one another in high esteem. It is not known whether Price had read Turgot's essay on progress, but since the English preacher cites from a passage in Condorcet's Life of Turgot (1786), we know he had some knowledge of Turgot's theory of progress. It is possible that Price either was influenced by the French theorist or confirmed in his own conception of progress.[28] Whatever the final conclusions concerning these problems, surely the standard histories have been neglectful in their appreciation of the English theologian.

At this point, a few brief observations on Price's idea of progress will be made, in preparation for the more detailed examination to follow. Price's view of human progress envisioned mankind following an upward path which would ultimately end in an age of "greater degrees of light

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[28]Lough argues that Price was probably confirmed in his idea of progress after reading Condorcet's Life of Turgot. Cf. J. Lough, Revue de Littérature Comparée, p. 93.

and virtue and happiness than have been yet known."[29] The progressive changes which Price had witnessed in his own lifetime--the spread of enlightenment, the American Revolution, the shutting down of the Inquisition--were all demonstrations of the general progress of mankind.

Like Saint-Pierre, Price viewed all history as a record of man's assent from barbarism to civilization. While to the present, man's progress had been "irregular and various," it was always forward. What was lost in one place was gained in another, until the English preacher could foresee a time when many countries would be what few are now, and "when some will be advanced to a state much higher."[30] The scriptures, human reason, and history, all testified to the gradual progress of mankind.[31]

It was the nature of improvement to increase itself, and each advance lifted mankind higher, and made it capable of further advances. Price wrote:

> Like a river into which, as it flows, new currents are continually discharging themselves, it [progress] must increase till it becomes a wide-spreading stream, fertilizing and enriching all countries, and covering the earth as the waters cover the sea.[32]

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[29]Richard Price, The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement in the State of Mankind (London, 1787), p. 5.

[30]Ibid., p. 13.

[31]Ibid., p. 6.

[32]Ibid., p. 20.

Price believed strongly in man's capacity for continued moral improvement (perfectibility) and looked forward to a time when man's powers would be enlarged and "the powers of men" would make "future generations as much superior to the present as the present are to the past."[33]

In summary, while Price and the English school shared with the French a belief in human progress, the Christian dimension of the English idea separated it from the secularism of the French conception. Where Condorcet and other members of his circle emphasized the role of man in the improvement of the species, Price and the English school all emphasized the role of divine Providence. Where the French looked forward to a future secular state founded on human reason, the English envisioned a future Christian utopia, founded on what Emil Brunner called the "certainty of God."[34] Price, himself, foresaw a future when all mankind would love one another as brothers and the "blessing of liberty would meet no restraint."[35]

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[33]Ibid., p. 12.

[34]Brunner, Eternal Hope, p. 71. Brunner argues that the major difference between secular and Christian utopias is that the latter is based not on human reason, but on the "certainty of God."

[35]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 24.

CHAPTER II

PROGRESS AND DISSENT

While the English school of progress included among its ranks Christians of every shade and opinion--from the conservative Hartley to the Arian Price--in the last half of the eighteenth century, the most enthusiastic expressions of the belief came from the "left-wing", from the Arian and Socinian (Unitarian) factions. By the beginning of the American Revolution, Unitarians like Price and Priestley, were at the forefront of those movements for social and political change. To approach Price as an embodiment of this dissenting radicalism, is to enter what Basil Willey called "the Protestant underworld."[1]

In the last half of the eighteenth century, there was an unsettled feeling in the English church as many formerly orthodox churchmen drifted towards more liberal, even radical, factions. Price's movement from the nominal presbyterianism of his youth to the Arianism of his

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[1]Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period (London, 1940), p. 168.

adulthood exemplified a rather common trend in the eighteenth-century English church.[2]

During the eighteenth century and increasingly after 1770, English Unitarianism, whether the Socinian of Arian variety, represented the most advanced position on social and political issues. It was among this faction of the Protestant "left", which included Price, Priestley, James Burgh and Thomas Belsham, that the cult of liberty--both in politics and theology--found its fullest expression. Though by the 1770's Price had rejected much of the narrow Calvinism of his early background for a more liberal and tolerant theology, he never departed from the spiritual training he had received as a young boy. And it was his developed theology, purged of the dogmatism of Calvinistic predestinarianism, that served as the foundation for his conception of historical progress.

This chapter will examine the impact of Protestant Dissent on Price's developing idea of progress. It is argued that Price's conception of progress was thoroughly consistent with his early ideas and experiences imbibed in the dissenting environment. To fail to understand the effect of this dissenting background on Price's intellectual

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[2]G.R. Cragg, The Church in the Age of Reason: 1648-1789 (Middlesex, 1960), p. 137.

development, is to lack an appreciation of the single most important influence on his mind.

The chapter is divided into three parts: the first gives a brief overview or history of Protestant Dissent from the seventeenth through the eighteenth century. The second examines the early dissenting environment of Price's childhood and adolescence. The third discusses the period of Price's ministry, from his ordination in 1743 to his death in 1791. In the last part, the kinds of ideas and influences which were impinging on Price and driving him towards his faith in progress, will be emphasized.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to establish a workable definition of Protestant Dissent. In most instances, the term Dissent referred to those English non-conformist sects (Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Unitarians) which had dissented from the authority and teachings of the Anglican Church. For this reason, Dissenters were barred from what Priestley called the "capital branches of civil society", religion and politics.[3] Here Priestley was referring specifically to the exclusion of English nonconformists from the major universities and political office. Not until the repeal of the dreaded Test

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[3]Joseph Priestley, Essay on the First Principles of Government (London, 1778), p. 56.

and Corporation Acts in 1828 would Dissenters gain relief from this discrimination.

I. HISTORY OF ENGLISH DISSENT

Price and his fellow Dissenters were the most recent examples of a long tradition of nonconformity that extended back to the early seventeenth century. While the Dissenters had been granted limited religious toleration in 1689, they continued to live under what Herschel Baker called a "tyranny of incapacitation."[4] Beginning in the seventeenth century, the Dissenters had launched an all-out assault on the Anglican stronghold, with the goal complete religious and political freedom. Under Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan Commonwealth they enjoyed relative tolerance and had made great strides forward. However, with the English Restoration, the re-enfranchised Anglican aristocracy passed severe laws, known as the Clarendon Code, which all but cancelled the early progressive gains. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer was made compulsory for all Englishmen, and by the Corporation Act of November of 1661, all Dissenters were disqualified for public office. The Act of Uniformity of May, 1662, required all clergy to take a loyalty oath to Charles II and declare their full

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[4]Herschel Baker, William Hazlitt (Cambridge, 1962), p. 5.

support of the Book of Common Prayer. The Act of Toleration of 1689, allowed freedom of worship to all groups that accepted the Trinity, the inspiration of the holy scriptures and repudiated both transubstantiation and the supremacy of the Roman pope. Dissenters, however, were still banned from universities and ineligible for any political appointment.

No group had more to gain through civil and religious progress than the Dissenters and it only seems natural that men like Price and Priestley would become the leading voices of reform and progress. Throughout the eighteenth century, as Baker emphasized, the Dissenters were an oppressed minority and the ideas of progress that filtered in from the continent were enthusiastically received by Price and his circle. As John Baillie has stressed, nowhere was the doctrine of perfectibility proclaimed with any more fervor than in the bastions of English Dissent.[5] Their disenchantment with the existing church and state caused English Dissenters to follow many of the new progressive movements with enthusiasm. As Basil Willey has pointed out, they had nothing to lose in "following wherever the truth led."[6]

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[5]Baillie, The Belief in Progress, p. 116.

[6]Willey, Eighteenth Century Background, p. 169.

II. CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

Price was born on February 23, 1723, in Tynton, England to Sarah and Rees Price. The Price home was a rather typical Nonconformist dwelling, although Rees Price probably practiced a more rigorous brand of Calvinism than some of his fellow Dissenters.[7] From an early age, Price's minister father introduced the young boy to such orthodox Calvinist doctrines as original sin, predestination and the Last Judgment--all of which Price would later reject. While Price would later embrace a more liberal, and in his view, a more "humane" form of Christianity (Unitarianism), his early spiritual training would exert a permanent effect on his thinking. Nowhere was this influence more evident than in his idea of historical progress.

Dissenters had always placed a high value on education and before Price was twelve years of age, his formal schooling had begun. His first tutor was his governess and shortly thereafter he studied under a neighbor, Mr. Peters, a man of more liberal views.[8] This early education was followed by a brief period in the dissenting academy at Bridgend. By the age of twelve, Price was prepared to enter

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[7]Roland Thomas, Richard Price, Apostle of Liberty (London, 1924), p. 9.

[8]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

the dissenting academy at Pentwyn where he would first be introduced to more liberal religious views (Arianism). Price would later adopt Arianism as his creed.

From his entrance into Pentwyn in 1735 until his ordination into the Presbyterian ministry in 1743, Price remained within the tolerant atmosphere of the dissenting academies. The dissenting schools were the best of their time, standing "immeasurably higher" than any other educational institutions.[9] This dissenting atmosphere encouraged wide discussion of doctrinal questions and within its broad confines the most controversial religious and political issues of the day were aired. It was during this important formative period of his life that Price began the movement that ultimately led him from the rigorous Calvinism of his youth to a broader form of rational Christianity.

From 1735 to 1738, Price studied at Pentwyn, a school regarded as one of the most liberal nonconformist institutions. The period at Pentwyn represented the first serious intellectual challenge to the orthodoxy of his childhood. During the eighteenth century, Anglican and dissenting circles were feeling the impact of the new rationalism and were making efforts to reconcile or incorporate

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[9]Earl Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism (Cambridge, 1952), p. 250.

these new ideas into a traditional Christian framework. Presbyterianism was only one of many Protestant denominations that was fragmenting in many different directions as many of the best minds gravitated towards more liberal forms of theology.[10]

By the time that Price had begun his course of studies at Pentwyn, many formerly devout and orthodox churchmen had embraced such new creeds as Arianism, Socinianism and Deism. It was through his association with the Arian teacher Samuel Jones that Price was first introduced to the writings of Samuel Clarke, rapidly developing a reputation as the leading spokesman of the Arian movement. Price's reading of Clarke's The Being and Attributes of God (the bible of eighteenth-century Arianism), gave to the young theology student an interpretation of human nature more conducive to the development of a theory of human progress. As long as Price held to the Calvinist doctrine of human depravity, there was little hope of constructing a more positive view of man and society. Clarke emphasized the native dignity rather than the innate depravity of man, arguing at times that men were capable of indefinite improvement--even perfection.

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[10]Carl Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom: The Influence of Richard Price on Eighteenth-Century Thought (Lexington, 1952), pp. 9-10.

In 1738, Price entered Talgarth Academy, which would be both the occasion for his decision to enter the dissenting ministry and take him further from the Calvinist orthodoxy of his early years. At Talgarth, Price was first introduced to the writings of Joseph Butler, whose work, The Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion, was recognized as the chief rebuttal to eighteenth-century Deism. Through his acquaintance with the famous English moralist, Price developed what Daniel Howe called a view of the dual source of knowledge. Both Price and Butler occupied a position similar to the medieval scholastics, arguing that reason and revelation were equally as necessary for a complete knowledge of the divine will. Price would always hold that there was absolutely nothing incompatible between reason and revelation--each one complementing the other.

While at Talgarth, Price followed a broad course of studies that included logic, metaphysics, theology, ethics, and by the mid-eighteenth century, science, modern language, and history.[11] During his years there, his father died, leaving Price a small inheritance, which he subsequently gave to his mother. Price was always much closer to his mother than his father and, according to one writer, his

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[11] Ibid., p. 11.

mother brought that "gentle influence" so needed into the Price household.[12] Carl Cone argues that it was from his mother that Price inherited a "sweetness of temper" that was a strong trait in the dissenting minister. Cone writes:

> Richard's mother, however, is said to have been charming and beautiful. She gave to Tynton whatever grace and lightness it possessed, just as she gave her sweetness of temper to her son.[13]

Most of the contemporary evaluations we have of Price substantiate his mother's influence upon him.

By 1740 when Price entered Coward's Academy, the young student had definitely decided to enter the dissenting ministry, full realizing the roadblocks that lay ahead for a preacher of the Presbyterian faith. The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed Dissenters to worship and teach without fear of imprisonment if they adhered to certain nominal requirements. However, they could not attend Oxford or Cambridge and they were barred from all public office. While at Coward's Academy, Price studied under John Eames and became Dr. Eames' prize student. By the close of his matriculation at Coward's, Price had studied the classics, Hebrew, philosophy, theology, mathematics and science. In 1743,

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[12]Thomas, Apostle of Liberty, p. 9.

[13]Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom, p. 9. Both Cone and Thomas, the principal biographers of Price, have a difficulty seeing any negative features of his personality. As a result, their objectivity can be seriously questioned.

at the age of twenty, Price was ordained a minister in the Presbyterian Church. From this time until his death in 1791, Price would move from one pastorate to another, finally settling in the famous dissenting community of Newington Green.

III. PRICE AS DISSENTING MINISTER

At the time that Price entered the ministry, England was a nation experiencing an increasing liberalism in religion as well as politics. Men like Price were very much aware of the thought on the continent and elsewhere, above all in France which had enjoyed a formidable reputation through its philosophes and savants. Rationalism, freedom of thought, deism, belief in human perfectibility--all these ideas were discussed openly in late eighteenth-century England.[14] In his later years, Price would refer to the work of Montesquieu, Fenelon and Turgot in France and Locke and Priestley in England, as being responsible for those "revolutions in which every friend of mankind is now exulting."[15] In the above quotation, Price was referring to the American and French Revolutions.

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[14]Bernard Schilling, Conservative England and the Case Against Voltaire (New York, 1950), p. 15.

[15]Richard Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country (London, 1790), p. 14.

In addition to experiencing a number of changes in both the political and religious spheres, Price's England seemed to have developed a definite awareness of change as an inevitable phenomenon. In the beginning, it was only a subtle feeling among the educated classes that all mankind was rapidly progressing towards a better world. However, by the late eighteenth century, this feeling was spreading among the general English public.

England's religious climate was becoming increasingly liberal in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Voltaire praised the free intellectual climate of the British, contrasting it with the authoritarian atmosphere in his native France. The English Enlightenment, of which Price was a leading representative, had a much more religious flavor than its French counterpart. This partially accounts for the number of Christian conceptions of progress emanating from England during the eighteenth century. The tendency in English progressive circles was to incorporate a belief in secular progress with the Christian world view. Price's idea of historical progress was one of the best examples of the distinctively Christian English formulation of the belief.

Price's first position in the ministry was as a chaplain to the Streatfield family, prominent landowners outside

of London. While serving faithfully in this position, Price continued to read on a variety of subjects, ranging from politics to theology. By this time, Price's interests embraced theology, philosophy, problems of population, mathematics, politics and life insurance.

During his twelve years with the Streatfields, Price was also the assistant pastor at the church of the Old Jewry, a Presbyterian chapel maintained by Samuel Chandler. The ministerial career was not an easy road to affluence. The average salary of a dissenting preacher was about forty pounds per annum. A salary of 100 pounds was very large and quite unusual.[16] Price's circumstances, however, were enriched considerably when both Streatfield and Price's uncle died, leaving Price a comfortable fortune. However, Price continued to live frugally and simply and was praised by his friends for his generosity.

In 1757, Price married Sarah Blundell in the chapel at Stoke Newington. For the next two years they resided at Hackney, north of Stoke Newington. Hackney was to become the site of one of the most successful dissenting academies in England. Though Price's wife was Anglican and held to a more conservative brand of theology, she was able to accept Price's Arianism (Unitarianism).

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[16]Anthony Lincoln, Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent, 1763-1800 (Cambridge, 1938), p. 60.

Price spent the last thirty years of his life in quarters at Stoke Newington, a small suburb north of London. When he was not preaching, he took an active part in the theological, political, scientific and social discussions, of one of the most liberal communities in eighteenth-century England. It was through these discussions, with such outstanding Christian liberals as Joseph Priestley, Theophilus Lindsey, Andrew Kippis and James Burgh, that Price was confirmed in his increasing liberal point of view. Price and these other Rational Dissenters represented the left wing of the Protestant movement, many ultimately embracing Unitarianism. After 1770, the French ideas of progress and perfectibility, which were gradually filtering into England, received the most enthusiastic support from these liberal Christians. Because of their disenchantment with the establishment (both political and religious), Price and his followers followed every progressive movement with great enthusiasm.

While the official church turned its back on reform, Rational Dissenters like Price supported all movements for reform, from the desire to reform the House of Commons to the effort to repeal the dreaded Test and Corporation Acts. It was natural that Dissenters, who had themselves suffered long from political, religious and social

discrimination, would become the most enthusiastic champions of reform in any form. The critical moment in the rise of reform took place in the late 1770's and by that time, the indentification of reformer and Unitarian was common.[17] If a humanitarian movement existed in the late eighteenth century, it was primarily carried by Dissenters like Price and Priestley.[18] Price and his circle were agreed that reform or progress in one area of society would bring about progress in other areas and for this reason, they championed all efforts to improve the existing social fabric.

As early as 1759, Price had expressed his enthusiasm for the progress of the century and the inevitable improvement of society. His belief in the inevitability of future progress gave his writings a certain buoyancy and optimism missing in other Enlightenment writers. Price's attitude towards history was similar in certain ways to Marx's interpretation in the nineteenth century. Both lashed out against the many inequities of society, but both were convinced that mankind would inevitably reach a state purged of society's worst evils. However, where Marx based his

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[17]Roland Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England (Oxford, 1954), p. 161.

[18]Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, p. 169.

conception of "progress" on the inevitable economic laws of history, Price rested his faith in human improvement on the divine will of Providence. As the eighteenth century rapidly drew to a close, the Unitarian preacher waited impatiently for the dawning of a new age in the history of mankind.

CHAPTER III

PROVIDENCE AND PROGRESS

While Price's interests ranged over a number of diverse areas--from theology to politics--his major preoccupation was always theology and its handmaiden in the eighteenth century, ethics. It was in his theological writings, produced between 1759 and his death in 1791, that the foundations for his belief in progress are found. Price was able to reconcile this idea and other eighteenth-century beliefs with his preconceived theological assumptions.[1] With other Rational Dissenters such as Joseph Priestley, Theophilus Lindsey and Thomas Belsham, Price played the role of a "new scholastic", attempting to incorporate the new eighteenth-century rationalism into his Christian Weltanschauung. His efforts in this direction moved him further from the mainstream of English Dissent to the outer edge of "orthodoxy", to Unitarianism. At the same time, his theological and ethical

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[1]Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, p. 182. Willey argues that the scripture-based theology of Price and other Dissenters facilitated their reconciliation of eighteenth-century ideas with religious truth.

assumptions led him to affirm the progress of man.

During the eighteenth century, the established church and the sects (Independents, Presbyterians, Baptists and Unitarians) were swept by a rising tide of "rationalism." There was a widespread belief, inside and outside the church, that the truth in politics, religion and morals, could to some extent be discovered through the proper application of right reason. Extreme rationalists, such as the deists and free-thinkers, went as far as to assert that reason alone would resolve "all mysteries into simple logic" and ultimately dispel the "last shadows of darkness and superstition."[2] According to one writer, reason was a panacea for all ills.[3]

However, as Peter Gay has emphasized, there was a "wealth of meaning" collected under the word reason.[4] According to Gay, each point of view must be examined in terms of its distinctive approach to "reason." Gay further states that about the only thing all "rationalists" held in common was the belief that reason was the most enlightened and civilized method of pursuing most intellectual

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[2]Cragg, The Church in the Age of Reason, p. 167.

[3]Lawrence Wanlass (ed.), Gettell's History of Political Thought (New York, 1953), p. 237.

[4]Peter Gay, "The Enlightenment in the History of Political Theory," Political Science Quarterly, vol. LXIX, p. 379.

concerns.

English Unitarianism, of which Price was a leading representative, is regarded by most historians of the eighteenth century, as one of the principal English rational sects. Both Basil Willey and Earl Wilbur, in their discussions of Unitarianism, refer to Price, Priestley, and other Unitarians, as Rational Dissenters.[5] However, if Unitarianism, in all its varieties, can be called "rational", it was not rational in the sense of the deists and free-thinkers. Where prominent deists like Anthony Collins and Matthew Tindal believed human reason was sufficient in itself, Price and his circle argued that both reason and revelation were necessary to fully understand God's will for man and society.

Unitarian moralists had what historian Daniel Howe called a view of the dual sources of knowledge. Neither revelation nor reason could be abandoned, lest the "integrated structure of Christianity come crashing down."[6] As Howe points out, English and American Unitarians followed the lead of the eighteenth-century British moralist Joseph Butler in their ideas regarding reason and revelation. In

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[5]Cf. Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, p. 193, and Earl Wilbur, History of Unitarianism, pp. 240-250.

[6]Daniel Howe, The Unitarian Conscience, Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861 (Cambridge, 1970), p. 70.

the English clergyman's famous rebuttal of eighteenth-century deism, they found strong arguments in favor of their dual view of knowledge. Butler argued that, while both reason and revelation were subject to contradiction and misunderstanding, both were from God, and both were necessary for a complete realization of God's will. Price, following Butler, also argued that God conveyed information to men, both by "reason as well as revelation."[7] While both were capable of being misunderstood, and "creating disputes", each must be pursued in an attitude of trust.[8]

The importance of Price's theology to his idea of progress can be better understood if Price's distinctive position within Unitarianism is viewed. While all Unitarians subscribed to certain fundamental beliefs--the most important being their rejection of the Trinity--the eighteenth-century English movement can be broken down into essentially two schools: the Arian, descended from the fourth-century heretic Arius of Alexandria, and the Socinian (the most liberal of the two schools) which took its

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[7]Richard Price, Sermons on the Christian Doctrine, As Received by the Different Denominations of Christians (London, 1815), p. 4.

[8]Ibid.

name from the sixteenth-century Polish theologian Faustus Socinus.[9] In the later eighteenth century, English Unitarianism consisted primarily of men who called themselves Socinians. Most of the leading figures in the Unitarian movement--Priestley, Theophilus Lindsey, James Burgh and Andrew Kippis--subscribed to some form of the Socinian creed. Socinian Christians regarded Priestley and Lindsey as their spokesmen, while Arian Christians looked to the leadership of Price.[10]

From a theological point of view, Arianism was much more conservative than Socinianism, retaining much more of the traditional faith. The scientific-materialism of Priestley and his circle shocked Arians like Price, and the Arian spokesman responded with a strong critique of these views.[11] The main theological dispute, however,

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[9]Staughton Lynd argues that Priestley's political radicalism was largely influenced by his Socinian theology. Cf. Staughton Lynd, Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism (New York, 1968), p. 30.

[10]Howe argues that Price, more than Priestley, was one of the chief sources of Harvard Unitarians at the end of the eighteenth century. Cf. Howe, Unitarian Conscience, pp. 50-51.

[11]Priestley had written at length on the superfluous concept of the human soul, and had also advanced a "material" interpretation of God. In response to these arguments, Price debated these theological points with Priestley. See Richard Price, A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity, in a Correspondence between Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley (London, 1778).

between the two schools derived from their different interpretations of the nature and mission of Christ. Priestley's circle argued that Christ was only a man (though a superior one), rejected the Arian doctrine of pre-existence, and repudiated the Arian belief in the Incarnation and the Atonement. In contrast, Price's circle argued that Christ was divine, and while not co-equal with the Father (Trinitarian doctrine), had pre-existed with him, and taken human form to "save and bless a sinful race."[12] Both Arian Christianity (as represented by Price) and Socinian Christianity (as represented by Priestley and Lindsey) occupied the far left of English Dissent. However, Arianism was to the right of Socinianism and represented a much more traditional approach to Protestant Christianity.

If these theological divisions divided the English Unitarian movement, politically there was more agreement: of all the eighteenth-century sects, Unitarianism represented the advanced guard of political radicalism. Clinton Rossiter refers to Price, Priestley, Burgh, and Hartley, among others, as the principal members of a small "band of radicals" whose writing strongly influenced the

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[12]Richard Price, Sermons on the Christian Doctrine, As Received by the Different Denominations of Christians p. 45.

leaders of the American Revolution.[13] With these brief introductory remarks, a later chapter will enlarge on the important role Price played during the revolutionary era.

The remainder of this chapter and those that follow will attempt to demonstrate the relation between Price's theology and his idea of human progress. Nowhere is this relationship more evident than in his view of divine Providence as the source of all human progress. It was his belief in Providence that marked the greatest break between Price and those standard French writers of progress.

In his classic study, The Idea of Progress, J.B. Bury argued that the fundamental assumptions of the idea of human progress were incompatible with a belief in divine Providence. Bury further argued that as long as the belief in Providence was in the ascendancy, no true theory of progress could arise.[14] This interpretation, as Jewish scholar Nathan Rotenstreich has shown, was only partly valid. Its validity depended entirely on the acceptance or rejection of Bury's conception of progress as a "continuous advance, initiated, sustained, and regulated by the intra-historical forces of

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[13]Clinton Rossiter, The Political Thought of the American Revolution (New York, 1963), pp. 71-72.

[14]Bury, The Idea of Progress, pp. 21-22.

human knowledge."[15] If however, a different conception of progress is accepted, there is no reason why the idea of progress cannot be reconciled with the belief in Providence.[16] Price's conception of progress--controlled and directed by divine Providence--attempted such a reconciliation.

Price's belief in Providence was based on three sources: reason, empirical investigation and history. Living in the first age of modern science, he felt compelled to demonstrate the "scientific" validity of his belief. While his arguments were naive in terms of modern science, they had much in common with the thinking of his age. Price reasoned that the idea of perfection (God) implied power, wisdom, goodness and a providence over all things.[17] The divine power could not be an "indifferent spectator" of the world he had created. His absolute goodness required him to exercise a constant supervision over the natural and human realms: "The course of nature is nothing but his power, exerting itself everywhere . . . in order to answer the best ends."[18] Therefore

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[15]Nathan Rotenstreich, "The Idea of Historical Progress and Its Assumptions," History and Theory, Vol. X, no. 2, p. 198.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Richard Price, "On Providence," Four Dissertations (London, 1767), p. 5.

[18]Ibid., p. 173.

Price concluded, that a God without providence was "undoubtedly a contradiction."[19] As Carl Cone has noted, Price's God was not the impersonal deity of eighteenth-century deism, but the living, personal, ruler of the universe.[20]

The testimony of the senses also required man to believe in the providence of God. While they alone could not warrant a belief in divine Providence, they acted as springs to further "discoveries of reason" that substantiated the belief. These "discoveries of reason" forced rational men to accept additional truths that they were "incapable of suggesting."[21] It was just this kind of "reasoning" that Hume attacked as a vain search for first principles. According to Hume, this kind of knowledge must remain forever "shut up from human curiosity."[22] Price's rationalism was in the tradition of seventeenth-century Cartesianism which had largely been undermined by eighteenth-century scientific-empiricism.

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[19] Ibid., p. 6.

[20] Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom, p. 26.

[21] Price, Four Dissertations, p. 23.

[22] David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Charles Hendel (Indianapolis, 1955), p. 45.

While man's reason and his senses required him to believe in Providence, it was in the record of the human past that Price found the strongest support for his belief. In his view, all history was nothing more than the record of the "operations of Providence concurring with those tendencies to human improvement" found in man.[23] Throughout history, Providence had secretly and indirectly used man's reason and his passions to accomplish ends of which he was unaware.[24] Price pointed to numerous examples of this working-out of the divine plan. The passions of Henry VIII were the means used by Providence to bring about the Reformation, an important step in man's religious progress. More recently, Price could point to the American Revolution as an example of God's control of the affairs of men. Price wrote: "It is a conviction I cannot resist, that the independence of the English colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence . . . "[25] Such, according to Price, were the indirect means by which Providence worked.

In his recent study, The Idea of Progress, Charles

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[23]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 26.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Richard Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution (London, 1785), p. 7.

Van Doren stated that writers fall into one of three basic categories in their explanation of how Providence brings about human progress: some argue that Providence slowly reveals itself throughout time, others state that Providence imposes a "progressive" pattern upon history but refrains from intervening; and lastly, some believe that Providence uses man's reason and passions to bring about man's betterment.[26] At different times, Price's conception fits into all three categories; however, in most cases, it fits into the first. Price's interpretation of Providence's role in human progress bears some resemblance to Lessing's "education of the human race." Both argue that God educates humanity slowly in his ways, each advance preparing man for further advances. Price wrote:

> The government of the Deity proceeds gradually and slowly. As he does not bring the individuals of the human race on the stage of mature life, before they have been duly prepared for it . . . so neither does he bring the species to that finished state of dignity and happiness . . . without a similar introduction and education.[27]

While history demonstrated the general progress of the species directed by Providence, man's progress was most evident in three areas: science and philosophy,

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[26]Van Doren, The Idea of Progress, p. 76.

[27]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 18.

religion and politics. Man's progress in science and philosophy had been "irregular and various" and ages of progress and advancement had been followed by ages of barbarism. However, despite occasional setbacks, the general progress of man had always been forward.[28] In the early beginnings of society, man had lived as an animal, destitute of art, law and ideas. From this low condition, Providence had brought mankind to its present advanced state.[29] Beginning in the seventeenth century, man's forward advancement had been accelerated as Providence saw fit to give mankind a more complete revelation of scientific and philosophical truth. At this time, a "glimmer of light appeared", and a "more rational philosophy began to gain ground."[30] This progress had culminated in the great work of Newton, who had raised man's knowledge higher than any other single individual.[31] In his enthusiasm over the achievements of the Scientific Revolution, Price reflected the general optimism of the Age of Enlightenment.

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[28] Ibid., p. 13.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., p. 15.

[31] Ibid.

The record of the human past also testified to the slow progress of religion, controlled and directed by divine Providence. At the time of Christ, man's prejudices were such that had Christianity prevailed, it would only have been in an imperfect form. The world was "too much in its infancy" to have a proper understanding of divine truth. As a result, Providence had waited until mankind was further advanced to reveal a more genuine Christianity.[32] Even in the years following Christ's death, it (mankind) was not ready for the universal prevalency that would exist in the future. However, in the past two hundred years (the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment), Price witnessed great progress in the liberalization of religion.

In Price's view, the century had seen great strides in the progress of religion in general--and Christianity in particular. The liberalization of doctrine, the declining influence of Catholocism, the extinction of the Jesuit order, were signs of a "greater harmony among the possessors of Christianity."[33] The Enlightenment was a time of great human advancement, and Price believed

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[32] Ibid., p. 17.

[33] Ibid., p. 23.

"sentiments so reasonable" would continue to spread.[34]

Price attacked the corruptions of the existing churches (both Catholic and Protestant), arguing that they held to doctrines that were contrary to the Scriptures and the teaching of Christ. He criticized conventional beliefs--original sin, predestination and the Trinity--as the product of the "ignorance and barbarity of the dark ages."[35] While Price lamented the fact that in many churches these beliefs still held strong, he was encouraged by the gradual falling away from these false doctrines. As Price contemplated the future, he looked forward to a time when religion would consist only of an "impartial inquiry and an honest mind", rather than outworn rites and ceremonies.[36] The progress of religion in the Enlightenment was only the first stage of a development that would culminate in a literal Millennium on this earth; at that time, all men would love one another as brothers, live in a state of spiritual peace, and all previous religious differences "would

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[34]Ibid.

[35]Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 17.

[36]Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, p. 6.

be exploded."[37]

If Price was encouraged by the progress in science and religion, he was equally as enthusiastic over what he called the progress in "just notions of the origin and end of civil government."[38] Price observed a close relation between political freedom and human progress. He argued that only under the maximum conditions of liberty (such as existed in ancient Greece), could man reach the optimum of his potential. Liberty was "the soil where the arts and sciences have flourished." The freer a state had been, the more had the "powers of the human mind been drawn forth."[39] While Price realized that only in small states could there be pure liberty, he believed that through representation enough liberty could be secured to guarantee a limited amount of progress.

Price viewed the general social progress of the eighteenth century as primarily the result of the spread of right notions of liberty. Price praised Locke, Montesquieu, Turgot and Priestley, for disseminating "just

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[37]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 23.

[38]Ibid., p. 22.

[39]Richard Price, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, The Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America (London, 1776), p. 17.

notions of themselves, of their rights, of religion, and the nature and end of civil government."[40] The American and the French Revolutions were the results of this growing climate of political freedom in western civilization. Price lived through the course of the American Revolution and took more than a passing interest in the events, becoming a leading Anglo-publicist for the American cause.[41] The English divine believed the Revolution played an important role in the progressive advancement of mankind; the relation of his conception of the Revolution to his theory of progress will be considered in a later chapter. Only a few brief introductory remarks will be offered at this time.

From the beginning of the struggle, Price was convinced the Revolution was divinely inspired, ordained by Providence for the benefit of mankind. In 1785, at the end of hostilities, Price reflected on the significance of the Revolution:

> The late war, in its commencement and progress, did great good by disseminating just sentiments

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[40]Price, Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 14.

[41]Before the Revolution, Price was corresponding frequently with a number of leading American patriots (such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee) and continued to work for the colonial cause throughout the conflict.

> of the rights of mankind, and the nature of legitimate government . . . but in its termination, the war has done still greater good by preserving the new governments from the destruction in which they must have been involved, had Britain conquered . . . I, therefore, think I see the hand of Providence in the late war working for the general good.[42]

Price added that, second only to Christianity, the American Revolution "might prove the most important step" in the progress of mankind.[43] America would become a refuge for the oppressed, a land where the blessings of liberty and science would be cherished. In viewing the Revolution as the beginning of a new era in human affairs, Price was like those western intellectuals in 1917 who held out similar expectations for the Russian Revolution. No event before the French Revolution raised his hopes higher than the American struggle and he viewed it as a fitting culmination of a century of progress.

In summary, Price viewed the entire course of human history as a demonstration of the progress of mankind, controlled and presided over by Providence. The evidence of progress that he viewed in the past, encouraged him in his belief of future progress. In 1787, Price spoke of a

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[42]Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, pp. 2-3.

[43]Ibid., p. 6.

state, lying between the present and the end of time--a state that would be the scene of general happiness, second only to heaven itself. Price wrote:

> It is a kingdom of light, and peace, and virtue. It is the beginning and foundation of an everlasting kingdom of the heavens . . . . With the utmost ardour then might the first apostles and first disciples pray for the coming of this kingdom, and nothing can now be a juster object of the prayers of Christians.[44]

While in certain respects, Price's vision of the last age had similarities with other eighteenth-century utopias, a closer examination would reveal features uncommon with these standard Enlightenment conceptions. With these introductory remarks, the following chapter will focus on Price's vision of the final end of progress, one of the key elements in his theory of human improvement.

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[44] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Chapter IV

PROGRESS AND THE MILLENNIUM

In his recent work, The Idea of Progress, Charles Van Doren states that the issue of whether progress will continue indefinitely or end in some final age of perfection or happiness is a major question in progressive writing. This "end", what Van Doren calls a "plateau", does not have to be characterized by the absence of change alltogether. What no longer continues is any change "for the better" in what the individual writer considers the significant aspects of historical progress. While most believers of progress argue that progress is indefinite, a small minority--including Marxists and Millennialists--agree that progress will terminate in a final earthly state.[1] Price's idea of progress--which included a vision of a final state towards which man was moving--fits into the second category.

At first glance, Price's vision of the last age

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[1]Van Doren, Idea of Progress, p. 262.

appears similar to the conceptions of secular utopia advanced during the eighteenth century. However, a closer scrutiny, demonstrates that this idea, like his conception of Providence, exhibits strong religious features, deriving also from Price's Christian Weltanschauung. The final end or destination towards which Providence was speeding mankind was none other than the Christian Millennium.[2]

Clarke Garrett has shown how widespread millennialism, or some variation of it, was in eighteenth-century English scholarly circles.[3] Price was only one of many (described by Garrett) who subscribed to some form of the belief. Garrett notes that the efforts of Christian apologists (such as Price) to demonstrate the compatibility of reason and revelation led to an emphasis on prophecy as a "demonstration of God's power which could be verified by human experience."[4] To show that the prophecies had been fulfilled, would prove "God's power was real and that the Bible was true."[5] The millennial features of Price's conception of historical progress represented

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[2]Cf. Emil Brunner, Eternal Hope (Philadelphia, 1954) for an excellent discussion of the idea of the "Christian utopia" vs the "secular utopia," pp. 68-76.

[3]Clarke Garrett, "Joseph Priestley, the Millennium, and the French Revolution," Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. xxxiv, January-March, 1973, p. 53.

[4]Ibid. [5]Ibid.

a major departure from other eighteenth-century theories of progress.

While his earlier writings between 1758 and 1776 make little mention of the "last age" or "Millennium", his later essays and treatises return frequently to the subject. The American Revolution was crucial in this connection--what had been only a passing interest before the Revolution became an avid anticipation of the millennial advent after the Revolution. From 1776 on, Price frequently spoke of the coming of the last age, referring to it variously as the "reign of the saints," the "kingdom of God," the "final paradisaical state," and the "Millennium," itself.[6] While these appellations lend themselves easily to various interpretations (both religious and secular) a careful examination of Price's writings reveals that they definitely refer to what Christians understood as the Millennium.

The idea of the Millennium has received multifarious interpretations and formulations throughout history. However, for most Christians, the Millennium referred to that period, spoken of in Revelation XX, 4-6, when following Christ's return, there would begin a thousand-year

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[6]Price's conception of the "last age" or Millennium was based primarily on his readings of Daniel, Isaiah, and Revelation.

reign of peace and justice. This glorious age would be the culmination of human history as we know it--and represent the beginning of an everlasting kingdom of the heavens. Price understood the Millennium in essentially these terms.

While the major source for Price's millennial views is his essay on progress, The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement in the State of Mankind (1787), his earlier writings touch briefly on the subject. The first lengthy discussion of the Millennium and its relation to his conception of historical progress is found in the opening paragraphs of the Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution (1785). Here Price introduces for the first time his millennial interpretation of progress, which he later enlarged upon in the Evidence.

In the opening pages of the Observations, Price referred to a future state when kings and priests "would have no power", and that slavery which had "hitherto debased the world" would be ended.[7] This glorious age, similar to the first paradisaical one, would be the final consummation of man's progress. Price wrote:

> . . . the progress of improvement will not cease till it has excluded from the earth most of its worst evils, and restored that paradisaical state,

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[7]Price, Observations on the American Revolution, p. 3.

> which, according to Mosaic History, preceded the present state.[8]

In the Observations, Price made no explicit reference to the Millennium, nor did he designate any kind of Christian utopia. However, his reference to the restoration of a earthly state similar to the "paradisaical state" of pre-history, implied a millennial interpretation.

Later, in 1789, at the beginning of the French Revolution, Price again turned his thoughts to the future. He wrote:

> . . . but the time is I hope, coming, when a conviction will prevail of the folly as well as the iniquity of wars; and when the nations of the earth, happy under just governments, and no longer in danger from the passions of Kings, will find out better ways of settling their disputes; and beat (as Isaiah prophesies) their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks.[9]

Price's reference to the particular passage in Isaiah (a favorite source for interpreters of the Millennium) is evidence of his millennial views. Near the end of his sermon, eulogizing the French Revolution, the Unitarian preacher again referred to a distant age when "the dominion of kings" would be replaced by the "dominion of reason and conscience."[10]

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[8]Ibid., p. 5.

[9]Richard Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 30.

[10]Ibid., p. 50.

The above references alone would not be enough evidence to support a thorough-going millennial interpretation. However, in the Evidence (1787), Price first referred explicitly to the Millennium.

In an early passage, the Unitarian divine spoke of a better state to come on this earth:

> . . . there is a kingdom of Christ still to come. You should recollect that there are two comings mentioned in scriptures . . . though the former is past, yet we may pray for the latter . . . for that better state of things upon earth.[11]

This "kingdom of Christ still to come," refers to what is called in Christian literature the Second Coming or the Millennium. In a later passage, Price explicitly mentions the "Millennium." Price wrote:

> I might now, would the time allow, proceed to recite many other circumstances in the state of the world, which are preparations for the revolution in favour of human happiness . . . . All these circumstances show us man a milder animal, antichrist falling and the Millennium hastening.[12]

The above passages demonstrate that Price viewed the Millennium as the culmination of the forward progress of mankind.

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[11]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 4.

[12]Ibid., p. 9.

Like Priestley, Price set no precise date for the beginning of the Millennium, although he seemed to regard certain present circumstances (in particular the American Revolution) as "signs" of its approach. While the exact date of its advent must remain purely speculation, it is possible to construct some thoughts concerning this subject. In 1787, Price wrote:

> In the present instance particularly, it assures us, that an extension of Christ's kingdom and a general amendment of the state of the world, are blessings which lie in some degree within our reach . . . . A more prosperous state of things is to take place on this earth . . . and the kingdom of the Messiah to become universal.[13]

Later, in the same work, Price noted: "We see the clouds scattering . . . . The shades of night are departing. The day dawns; and the sun of righteousness will soon rise with healing in his wings. Let us keep our attention fixed on this reviving prospect."[14]

Finally, in 1789, in his sermon praising the French Revolution, Price wrote:

> I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment beginning in human affairs . . . the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience.[15]

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[13] Ibid., p. 50.

[14] Ibid., p. 53.

[15] Price, Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 50.

Price viewed the Millennium as bringing a fitting culmination to human progress, and since he admonished his readers to keep their attention "fixed on this reviving prospect," it is clear he believed the Millennium to be sometime in the "foreseeable" future.

Closely related to Price's conception of the final destination of human progress was his idea of what the eighteenth century called human perfectibility. Morris Ginsberg argues, that to most eighteenth-century progressives, perfectibility was synonomous with progress: "To the thinkers of the eighteenth century, progress meant in the first place human perfectibility."[16] It is important to point out, that to most of these thinkers, the term perfectibility did not refer to man's capacity for perfection, only his capacity to improve (especially in the moral sphere). It was agreed that men were capable of continued improvement on this earth--few argued that man would reach perfection. Price understood human perfectibility in essentially these terms.

While there were many expressions of the eighteenth-century belief, the classical one remains that of the Marquis de Condorcet. Condorcet wrote:

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[16]Ginsberg, The Idea of Progress: A Revaluation, p. 17.

> In short will not the general welfare that results from the progress of the useful arts once they are grounded on solid theory . . . incline mankind to humanity, benevolence and justice? In other words, do not all these observations . . . show that the moral goodness of man . . . is capable of indefinite perfection like all his other faculties . . .[17]

Condorcet did not envision that mankind would ever reach total perfection in any sense, but he did believe that science held out great prospects for the continued improvement of all man's faculties--including the moral one.

Perhaps, Carl Becker, in his celebrated The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers (1932), best summed up the eighteenth-century belief in perfectibility:

> The utopian dream of perfection . . . having been long identified with the golden age or the Garden of Eden or life eternal in the Heavenly City of God . . . was at last projected into the life of man on earth and identified with the desired and hoped-for regeneration of society.[18]

The belief in perfectibility was based, in most cases, on the assumption that there was nothing intractable in man's nature, that it was infinitely malleable. That through human effort, it was possible to achieve a social order based on harmony, justice and reason. In the words

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[17]Condorcet, Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind, trans. J. Barraclough. p. 193.

[18]Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers, p. 139.

of Ginsberg, "Man had the power to make himself."[19]

In most instances, the idea of perfectibility derived from a purely secular interpretation of man and society. For the majority of eighteenth-century proponents of the belief, the idea was based on the assumption that man could improve himself--without outside aid or intervention. Most of these thinkers ruled out any appeal to a supra-historical force such as Providence as a guarantee of man's perfectibility. This interpretation of perfectibility suited an interpretation of man's nature that excluded all inherent purposes or values.

However, while the dominant eighteenth-century tendency was a secular one, in a few cases the direction was towards a spiritual interpretation of the idea. This was particularly true of England where the leading theorists of perfectibility were Christian thinkers such as David Hartley, Joseph Priestley, William Paley and Richard Price. All of the above couched their respective ideas of perfectibility in a Christian (though at times heterodox) framework that postulated Providence as the guarantor of man's perfectibility. Of these thinkers, the ideas of Hartley, Priestley and Paley, have been given considerable attention. Price's conception, however, in many respects the

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[19]Ginsberg, The Idea of Progress: A Revaluation, p. 18.

most original, has been given only passing notice.

The first to call attention to Price's idea of perfectibility was a contemporary, the Marquis de Condorcet, regarded by many as the classical representative of the eighteenth-century belief. In a passage from his monumental Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind (1794), Condorcet makes the following affirmation:

> Finally we see the rise of a new doctrine . . . the doctrine of the indefinite perfectibility of the human race, of which Turgot, Price, and Priestley, were the first and most brilliant apostles.[20]

While Price had earlier alluded to his belief, Condorcet's evaluation was probably based on a reading of a passage from Price's Evidence where the English divine states: "Let us, says the Marquis de Condorcet excellently, be cautious not to despair of the human race . . . . Let us count on the perfectibility with which nature has endowed us . . ."[21]

While Price shared with the French philosophe a belief in perfectibility, in actual practice, the strong metaphysical or spiritual dimension of Price's conception separated it from the secularism of Condorcet's interpretation. While Price's belief broke with Condorcet and the

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[20]Condorcet, Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind, p. 142.

[21]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 51.

French School, it contained certain features (outlined below), that were a departure from the English School as well. The exact nature of these unique features will be discussed at a later point; at this point, it will suffice to point out that Price's conception of perfectibility represented an important expression of the English idea of progress.

It has long been an accepted notion of intellectual historians that the eighteenth-century belief in perfectibility was the logical outgrowth of Locke's tabula rasa psychology. R.V. Sampson, a leading authority on the Enlightenment, writes:

> In this belief [perfectibility], we have their own testimony for it, that they were largely influenced by the writings of Locke, who stands at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth.[22]

According to Sampson, it was Locke's rejection of innate ideas and the substitution of the mind as a blank tablet, tabula rasa (on which sensations left their impressions) that encouraged the eighteenth century to think in terms of man's perfectibility. Gone was the belief that men were born with certain ideas about morality and God that were innate. In its place emerged a human nature which

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[22]Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason, pp. 41-42.

the reformer could mold and shape:

> It was . . . the vivid conception of the tabula rasa, the picture of the mind as a virginal sheet of "white paper," on which by planning the environmental influences to suit the ends which we wish to achieve, we may write what we will, that caught the imagination of eighteenth-century reformers . . .[23]

Margaret Leslie makes a similar point. She argues that Locke's psychology provided the starting point for the following argument:

> That man . . . is necessarily progressive. Having no innate knowledge, he must have built up his present information, concepts and techniques by a process of gradual exploration . . . his present state must therefore be regarded as temporary and progress may be expected to continue with no discernible limits.[24]

Acceptance of Locke's doctrine of the tabula rasa and the accompanying belief that all man knows comes from his experience (the knowledge that his senses bring him) led the eighteenth century to proclaim the gospel of the perfectibility of man. Sampson writes: "If the seventeenth century elaborated the belief in man's capacity to progress indefinitely in the acquisition of knowledge, the eighteenth century . . . extended the belief to include man's capacity to achieve moral and social progress."[25]

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[23]Ibid., p. 44

[24]Margaret Leslie, "Mysticism Misunderstood: David Hartley and the Idea of Progress," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. XXXIII, no. 4, Oct.-Dec., p. 625.

[25]Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason, p. 40.

The arguments of Locke appealed to the irreligious and the religious. The dominant tendency within the English School was to develop the idea of perfectibility from Locke. Of the leading thinkers, all but Price built their theories on some variation of Lockian psychology. Priestley and Paley rested their ideas on an extension of Locke's theory of sensation--as seen through the writings of Hartley. Both Priestley and Paley acknowledged their debt to Hartley for giving them a basis on which to build an idea of human perfectibility.[26] Beginning with Locke's theory of sensation, Hartley argued that all men seek pleasure and avoid pain. From this premise, Hartley concluded that human society could be arranged (by planning the environment) that pleasure (which men seek) would be associated with higher pleasures more socially and morally desirable:

> . . . . The sensible Pleasures and Pains must be transferred by Association more and more every Day, upon things that afford neither sensible Pleasure or sensible Pain in themselves, and so beget the intellectual Pleasures and Pains.[27]

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[26]For a discussion of the influence of Hartley on Priestley, see R.V. Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason, cited above, pp. 46-49. For a similar treatment of Hartley's influence on Paley, see J. Delvaille's Essai sur l'histoire de l'idée de progrés jusqu'a la fin du XVIIIe siécle (Paris, 1910), pp. 520-521.

[27]David Hartley, Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations (London, 1749), vol. I, p. 82.

The principle of association was the basis for the ideas of perfectibility of Hartley, Priestley and Paley. However, in the final analysis, these Christian progressives always fell back on divine Providence as a sure guarantee that man would achieve greater and greater perfection. In summary, the above arguments demonstrate how Locke's psychology had penetrated even the most religious progressive circles in eighteenth-century England.

While the majority of theorists--including the Christian interpreters of perfectibility--based their ideas on an extension of Locke's theory of knowledge, it was possible to develop a theory of perfectibility from a completely opposite set of assumptions. Price's conception--which represented a unique contribution among eighteenth-century progressive circles--developed along these lines. Like other eighteenth-century theorists of perfectibility, Price began with a theory of human knowledge.

In contrast to Locke, who argued that all knowledge (including our ideas of morality) originated in either the senses or the mind reflecting on the senses, Price argued that the mind had a "faculty" of perception, distinct from both the senses and the reasoning intellect. This "faculty", the same in <u>all</u> men, was another source of knowledge--the source of our moral ideas which were innate. While Price's

conception of this "faculty" could easily lend itself to various interpretations, the English theologian emphasized that it was not what was commonly understood as "deduction." Price wrote:

> There may be further the occasion for observing, that the two acts of the understanding, being intuition and deduction, I have in view the former.[28]

Price referred to this intuitive "faculty" variously as the "power of the understanding," the "innate light," and the "eye of the mind."[29]

Winston Barnes and Daiches Raphael, leading Price scholars, argue that Price's theory of knowledge, what they call rational intuition, is Price's most original contribution to eighteenth-century ethical thought.[30] It is this theory of intuition that is the starting point or basis for Price's unique conception of human perfectibility. However, while this theory is the foundation for his peculiar idea of moral improvement, two further elements

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[28]Richard Price, A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals (London, 1787), p. 17. This is the third edition of the original 1758 publication, and differs slightly by omitting the words "and Difficulties" from the title. The Review is considered Price's chief ethical treatise.

[29]Lynd in the Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism believes Price's theory of intuition similar to the Quaker idea of the "inner light." Cf. p. 28.

[30]Cf. Winston Barnes, "Richard Price, A Neglected Eighteenth Century Moralist," Philosophy, XVII (1942), pp. 159-160 and Daiches Raphael (ed.) The Review (1945), p. xiv.

were needed before a full-fledged idea of perfectibility could emerge. First, there had to be a guarantee that men, having the capacity to know the good, would actively seek after it. Second, there had to be an assurance that once finding the good (knowledge of it), they would act upon it. The first was supplied by Price's belief in a divine Providence whose will was that mankind move to greater and greater perfection. The second was supplied by Price's interpretation of what he called moral obligation. According to the English divine, knowledge of the good would be automatically followed by a greater attachment to the good. Price wrote:

> Moral right and wrong, and moral obligation or duty, must remain or vanish together. They necessarily accompany one another, and make but as it were one idea.[31]

While Price's theory of knowledge provided the details for his conception of perfectibility, in the last analysis, like Hartley and his disciples, Price fell back on the ultimate guarantee of divine Providence. Having this assurance, the English savant could enthusiastically proclaim his unique idea of human perfectibility. In 1787, as support for his belief in perfectibility, Price cited a famous quotation from the Marquis de Condorcet:

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[31]Price, Review of the Principal Questions in Morals, p. 74.

> "Let us," says the Marquis de Condorcet excellently, "be cautious not to despair of the human race . . . Let us count on the perfectibility with which nature has endowed us . . ."[32]

However, while the above passage testifies to Price's belief in perfectibility, in the details of his theory he departed sharply from Condorcet and other eighteenth-century theorists. While both Condorcet and Price believed in man's perfectibility, the intransigent rationalism of the Frenchman's conception broke with Price's spiritual (a priori, intuitive) based theory.

In summing up Price's unique idea of human perfectibility, the purely spiritual nature of the Englishman's conception stood in sharp contrast to the material-based theories of the leading Enlightenment thinkers. At a time when the leading theorists of the idea (Hartley, Priestley, Godwin and Condorcet) reflected the dominant empirical tendency of eighteenth-century thought, Price offered a unique formulation of a popular eighteenth-century belief. Price's idea of perfectibility marked a reaffirmation of the belief that man's continued progress rested not on

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[32]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 51. Footnote. Condorcet's belief that Price was one of the first exponents of the doctrine of perfectibility was probably based on a reading of this passage from Price's Evidence. However, while both the English and the French thinker believed in general in "man's progress and perfectibility," in its details Price's conception was quite different than that of the French philosophe.

man's efforts--but on the will of Providence. In this sense, Price's formulation of perfectibility represented a return to an essentially spiritual (non-material) interpretation, running counter to the empirically-based theories of the Enlightenment.

CHAPTER V

PROGRESS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Of all the events in the eighteenth century, no single one raised Price's hopes higher or exerted a stronger impact on his conception of historical progress, than the American Revolution. The Unitarian divine viewed the Revolution as one of the most important struggles for liberty in human history, a major step forward in man's progress, and a "sign" of the approaching Millennium. In his conviction that the Revolution was to have a universal significance, Price shared a common belief with other eighteenth-century liberals. However, in his belief that the Revolution was foreordained by divine Providence--and signalled the approach of a Christian "utopia" on earth--he departed from the more secular interpretation of these other thinkers.

From its earliest beginnings, Price and other Rational Dissenters in England were convinced the Revolution bore what J.H. Plumb called the "hallmark of Providence."[1]

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[1]J.H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore, 1963), p. 135.

Writing at the end of the war, Price noted:

> It is a conviction I cannot resist, that the independence of the English colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence to introduce these times.[2]

A divinely-ordained struggle, the success of the colonies meant the triumph of virtue over sin--of good over evil. At the same time, the Revolution was one of the most important strides in the inexorable progress of man. In 1785, reflecting on the Revolution, Price wrote:

> . . . among the events of modern times tending to the elevation of mankind . . . next to the introduction of Christianity among mankind, the American Revolution may prove the most important step in the progressive course of human improvement.[3]

Just as the Puritans conceived of America as a seat for the spread of universal Christianity, Price conceived of America (after the Revolution) as the seat for the spread of the universal rights of man:

> The late war . . . did great good by disseminating just sentiments of the rights of mankind . . . and by laying the foundation there of an empire . . . from whence these blessings may spread.[4]

Considering the universal impact of the ideas of the Revolution, Price's judgment was extremely acute.

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[2]Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, p. 7.

[3]Ibid., p. 6. [4]Ibid., p. 2.

As the Unitarian divine wrote in the last-half of the eighteenth century, there was a widespread optimism that the world stood on the edge of a new threshold--that a new era was opening in human affairs. The outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775 had an impact similar to the French Revolution several years later; for most liberal-minded thinkers in Europe and England, the Revolution was a fitting culmination to a century of enlightenment and progress.

Of those who felt the impact of the Revolution, none was more enthusiastic in his praise or vocal in his support, than the Unitarian theologian Richard Price. From the beginning of the Revolution, Price took more than a passing interest in the events in the colonies. Lynd argues that Price was one of the principal members of a group of English publicists--including Hartley, Priestley, James Burgh, John Cartwright and Catherine Macaulay--whose writing "cleared the ground for revolution."[5] When the colonists needed a stronger argument than the "rights of Englishmen", they turned to the "doctrine of natural law" preached by Price and other radical Dissenters.[6]

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[5]Lynd, Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism, p. 24.

[6]Ibid., p. 25.

Throughout the Revolution, Price was informed of the course of events by a number of American friends which included such prominent figures as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Ezra Stiles, Charles Chauncey, Arthur Lee and Josiah Quincy Jr. From them Price learned of the American grievances, and by 1775, the English preacher had been persuaded of the justice of the American cause. From this point on, Price became one of the leading English supporters of the Revolution. Price's pro-American sympathies, however, brought a charge of radicalism against him, and consequently he suffered a torrent of abuse and hatred for his unpopular position.[7]

From the beginning of the Revolution, Price wrote and worked on behalf of the colonies, expressing from time to time through his writings and letters his sentiments concerning the struggle. As early as 1775, in a letter to Charles Chauncey, Price wrote:

> For my part, were I in America, I would go barefoot; I would cover myself with skins . . . knowing that my difficulties would be temporary and that I was engaged in the last struggle for liberty.[8]

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[7]John Agnew, "Richard Price and the American Revolution," Abstract of a dissertation, University of Illinois, 1949. p. 10.

[8]Richard Price, "Letter to Charles Chauncey," Richard Price Correspondence, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia. Letter of February 25, 1775.

By June of 1777, the English divine was persuaded of the morality of the American position and, that the Revolution was to play a unique role in human history. Writing to the American Arthur Lee, Price stated:

> Having done the little in my power, I . . . am now in the situation of a spectator waiting with inexpressible anxiety the issue of one of the most important struggles in the history of mankind.[9]

In the same letter, Price expressed his satisfaction in having promoted the "cause of liberty" in the great struggle.[10] Not until the French Revolution, would Price again be so enthusiastic over a single historical event.

From 1776 to the end of the Revolution, Price poured out a stream of writings in support of the American cause. In that year, he published what was to become his best known work on the Revolution, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty. The Observations sold 60,000 copies in the colonies and were translated into Dutch, German and French. Fifteen editions appeared in London in 1776, and it was reprinted several times in America. Most of the leading figures of the Revolution were familiar with the Observations and Lynd considers it of even more

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[9]Richard Price, "Letter to Arthur Lee," Richard Price Correspondence, cited above. Letter of June 11, 1777.

[10]Ibid.

influence than the celebrated Political Disquisitions of James Burgh. Lynd writes: "The subscription list for James Burgh's Political Disquisitions . . . reads like a Who's Who in the American Revolution . . . . Very likely even more influential was Richard Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty . . ."[11] The Observations represent the most comprehensive statement of Price's interpretation of the American Revolution.

In 1777, Price published a second essay on liberty, Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty, essentially an enlargement of the first essay. In 1778, he combined the two earlier works into a single volume, Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, a condensed version of the principal arguments in the first two essays. After the publication of the last work, Price wrote nothing until 1785, when he published his Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution.

Price's conception of the American Revolution as an important step in the progress of humanity was based on two strong convictions: first, that the Revolution of 1776 was both a confirmation and consummation of the natural rights ideals of the English Revolution of 1688, and second,

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[11]Lynd, Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism, pp. 25-26.

that in applying these ideals to actual historical conditions, the American Revolution had realized the fondest hopes of the eighteenth century--laying the foundation for the subsequent spread of these rights to the rest of humanity. In the words of Carl Becker, America had become a "kind of providential confirmation of ideas long accepted but only demonstrated in books."[12] For Price, the American Revolution represented the furthest advance to date in the progress of mankind.

In the immediate background was the English Revolution, in which Parliament had asserted itself over James II. While to many eighteenth-century theorists, including the Englishman Edmund Burke, the Revolution of 1688 was a purely English phenomenon, Price saw in these events something of universal (divine) significance.[13] According to Price, the English had appealed to the rights of man, and in so doing had spoken in terms that all men could apply to themselves.[14] For Price and other Dissenters, the English Revolution was the inspiration and the preparation for both the American

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[12]Carl Becker, The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas (New York, 1942), p. 231.

[13]For better understanding of debate between Price and Burke, see Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, intro. A.J. Grieve (London, 1910), p. 20.

[14]Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 32.

and French Revolutions.

While Price was challenged for his natural rights interpretation of the English Revolution, he continued to affirm that the revolution had secured the following natural rights: the right to liberty of conscience, the right to resist power when abused, and the right to choose one's own governors, cashier them for misconduct, and frame a government for oneself.[15] In Parliament's successful revolt against James II and in the American revolt against George III, Price saw the same natural rights at issue. In the sense that both the English and American Revolutions had affirmed these rights, they represented important steps forward in the progress of liberty.

While the English Revolution was the initial step and the necessary preparation for the American Revolution, it was to America that Price and other English liberals looked for a consummation of this modern progress. As the eighteenth century came to a close, America was more and more replacing England as the hope and symbol of man's future progress. In 1785, Price wrote:

> The late war . . . did great good by disseminating just sentiments of the rights of mankind . . . and by occasioning the establishment in

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[15] Ibid., p. 34.

> America of forms of government more equitable and more liberal than the world has yet known.[16]

America had demonstrated to the world that a government could be established on the rights of man, and in applying these rights, it had laid the foundation for their further spread. America would become an empire from which man's rights would spread "until they become universal . . . and that ignominious slavery which has hitherto debased the world is exterminated."[17]

This natural rights interpretation of the Revolution constituted the main basis for Price's progressive view of those events. At this point, this chapter will examine in detail Price's conception of natural rights as applied to the Revolution. However, before doing this, it will be helpful to first discuss what the eighteenth century understood by the natural rights of man.

For most eighteenth-century revolutionary thinkers, there was essentially one human nature, the same in all men. While in terms of physical, moral and intellectual qualities, men might be unequal, in this sense they were the same. Because of this fundamental equality of nature,

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[16]Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, p. 2.

[17]Ibid., p. 3.

all men derived certain natural rights. While there was some disagreement as to what constituted these rights, there was general agreement that they existed and must be recognized. Clinton Rossiter writes:

> In any case, a fundamental article of the American faith was the belief that every man--no matter what his station, calling, learning, and fortune--had certain natural, unalienable rights.[18]

Natural rights were simply those rights "which belong to man as man", natural, traceable to the great Legislator of the universe.[19] In Rossiter's opinion, the doctrine of natural rights was the "hard core of Revolutionary political thought; the possession of natural rights was the essence of being human."[20] Rossiter continues:

> . . . . The natural rights of man were so useful, even essential . . . that they were willing to equate them with natural law itself. The rights of man, that is to say, not only depended upon or sprang from natural law; they were natural law, at least so far as it could be understood by men.[21]

Most thinkers, as Rossiter implies, found the philosophical justification of the American Revolution in some variation of the natural rights argument. Of those

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[18]Clinton Rossiter, The Political Thought of the American Revolution (New York, 1963), p. 106.

[19]Ibid., p. 105.

[20]Ibid., p. 104.

[21]Ibid.

revolutionary thinkers who based their support of the Revolution on the rights of man, few were more influential than Price.

However, while Price expressed his natural rights theory in the common Lockian terminology of the eighteenth century, in certain respects he departed from the standard interpretations. John Agnew writes:

> Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty was not designed to express new principles, but it contained unusual adaptations and applications of accepted ideas.[22]

Rossiter makes a similar affirmation, emphasizing the significance of Price is that he brought "Locke up to date."[23] Both Cone and Lynd attribute these "unusual adaptations" to Price's essentially religious outlook. Cone writes:

> His political thought was raised on a strong foundation of morality and religious faith . . . . The principles of political and civil liberty were eternal and valid in themselves.[24]

Lynd points to the fact that the most quoted thinker in both Price's religious and political writings was the

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[22]Agnew, Abstract of Dissertation, p. 10.

[23]Rossiter, Political Thought of the American Revolution, p. 73. Also in Rossiter's Seedtime of the Republic (New York, 1953), in end notes, Rossiter mentions a number of newspapers printing Price's Observations.

[24]Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom, p. 79.

Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth.[25] The American historian contrasts Price's deeply spiritual outlook with other secular theorists of the Englightenment.

Whatever differences existed between Price and other natural rights theorists, all agreed that the right to liberty was man's most precious natural right. Rossiter writes:

> The natural right to liberty was central to all other rights; and the literature of the Revolution is full of salutes to its blessings and excellencies.[26]

From its earliest beginnings, Price regarded the American struggle as one involving the fundamental right to liberty. As early as 1775, he referred to the "last struggle for liberty" then taking place in the colonies.[27] Later, in 1777, Price expressed his satisfaction in having promoted the cause of liberty and justice in the war.[28] Perhaps, Price best expressed his position in the following passage:

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[25]Lynd, Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism, p. 30. Also, for an excellent discussion of the influence of Cudworth on Price, see J.A. Passmore, Ralph Cudworth (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 103-105.

[26]Rossiter, Political Thought of the American Revolution, p. 109.

[27]Price, "Letter to Charles Chauncey," Richard Price Correspondence, cited earlier.

[28]Price, "Letter to Arthur Lee," Richard Price Correspondence, cited above.

> Our colonies in North America appear to be now determined to do and suffer everything, under the persuasion, that Great Britain, is attempting to rob them of that liberty to which every member of society, and all civilized communities, have a natural and unalienable right.[29]

Price wrote the above passage in 1776, shortly after the beginning of the Revolution, but did not change his opinion throughout the course of those events. Until his death in 1791, Price continued to affirm his strong conviction that the colonists had only justly reacted to British attempts to deprive them of their liberty.

Price's progressive interpretation of the Revolution was conditioned by his Whig theory of history. The whole of history was no more than a running battle between the forces of liberty and the forces of tyranny. And while the former had suffered setbacks in the past, beginning with the English Revolution of 1688, the forces of liberty had gone from victory to victory. For Price, the English Constitution (reaffirmed by the Glorious Revolution) was the most liberal and most perfect in the world. It represented the furthest advance of man's political liberty, and was a model and inspiration for all people. In 1789, Price thanked God for the Revolution (English), which had shattered the fetters "which despotism had been long

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[29]Price, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, p. 1.

preparing."[30] The English Revolution was especially important to Price and the Dissenters, for it was through it that they had gained their religious freedom. Price wrote:

> We are met to thank God for the event in this country to which the name of THE REVOLUTION has been given . . . . By a bloodless victory, the fetters which despotism had been long preparing for us were broken; the rights of the people were asserted, a tyrant expelled, and a Sovereign of our choice appointed in his room.[31]

However, no matter how perfect in theory, the English constitution of 1688 had not been able to preserve English or American liberty in the eighteenth century. Rather then become the symbol of liberty to the rest of the world, the English, in the eighteenth century, were sunk in both corruption and tyranny. The English constitution, in the eyes of Price and other Whig liberals, was perfect only in theory. In 1787, Price wrote:

> I look upon our constitution . . . as better adapted than any other to this country, and in theory excellent. I have said theory for, in consequence of the increase of corruption and miserable inadequateness of representation, it is chiefly the theory and form of our constitution that we possess.[32]

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[30]Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 31.

[31]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[32]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, pp. 30-31.

The hopes of 1688 had been dissipated in the political experiences of the eighteenth century--the American Revolution representing the most infamous indicator of England's fall as a leader of liberty. In England's default, America became for Price and other liberals the new symbol of liberty and hope of the oppressed. In the words of historian Gordon Wood, America, was a "disconcerting obstacle in the Crown's march to absolutism, a shining symbol to oppressed peoples everywhere that freedom still lived."[33]

While the Revolution was a fight for liberty, it was civil liberty, in particular, that Price saw at issue in the English-American struggle. Of the four different kinds of liberty that Price distinguished--physical, moral, religious and civil--it was the last that the Americans were fighting to preserve. In 1776, in the Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the English divine defined this liberty:

> In like manner, Civil Liberty is the power of a Civil Society or State to govern itself by its own discretion; or by laws of its own making, without being subject to any foreign discretion, or the imposition of any extraneous will or power.[34]

In concrete terms, the English attempts to rule the

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[33]Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill, 1969), p. 43.

[34]Price, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, p. 3.

colonies, without allowing the colonists fair and adequate representation, constituted the violation of their civil liberty. Price wrote:

> From the nature and principles of Civil Liberty . . . it is an immediate and necessary inference that no one community can have any power over the property or legislation of another community, that is not incorporated with it by a just and adequate representation.[35]

In violating the liberty of the colonists, the mother country had relegated them virtually to the status of slaves. Price continued:

> But a country that is subject to the legislature of another country, in which it has no voice, and over which it has no controul, cannot be said to be governed by its own will. Such a country therefore, is in a state of slavery.[36]

Here in embryo is the philosophical justification for the cry "no taxation without representation" which was ringing through the colonies by 1776.

According to Price, the Americans not only had the right--but the sacred duty--to resist this encroachment on their liberty. Price praised the colonists for advancing liberty further than any previous people. He compared them to the ancient Jews for their importance in the plans of Providence: "If the United States should escape some dangers which threaten them . . . it will be

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[35] Ibid., p. 19.

[36] Ibid.

true of them as it was the people of the Jews, that in them all the families of the earth shall be blessed."[37]

While the American Revolution was of great import for the present, it was of even greater consequence for the future. While Price had given some thought to this question during the war, it was not until after the Revolution, that he devoted extensive time and thought to it. However in 1785, he wrote:

> But among the events of modern times tending to the elevation of mankind, there are none probably of so much consequence as the recent one which occasions these observations.[38]

The question that immediately arises was to what extent Price viewed the American Revolution as a "sign" or a harbinger of future events. Earlier, it was noted that Price conceived of the Millennium as bringing a glorious end to man's forward progress. Could it be that the Revolution was a foretaste, a portent of that final age mentioned in Revelation XX? The relation of the American Revolution to the approaching Millennium is one of the most intriguing problems to evolve out of a study of Price's conception of human progress.

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[37]Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, p. 8.

[38]Ibid., p. 6.

The difficulty arises from the fact that, while Price wrote occasionally on the subject of the Millennium, he was extremely reticent about the date of its arrival, or the relation of the Revolution to its advent. It is the contention of this study, however, that, while Price set no precise date for its arrival, he believed its coming to be "soon", and that he considered the Revolution as a "sign" of its approach. By piecing together the information on this subject, it will be shown that Price did indeed regard the American Revolution as the harbinger of the last age.

It is obvious that the American Revolution had a strong impact on Price's millennial ideas. The Revolution transformed a rather casual interest in eschatology into an avid anticipation for the Millennium. Where up to 1776, Price had written little on the subject, after 1776, he returned frequently to the subject of the last days. The fact that the Revolution was such a pivotal event in Price's millennial strivings, could easily lead to the conclusion that it played a special role in his ideas on the subject. This is the contention of this chapter, and the remainder of the chapter will demonstrate the relation of Price's view of the American Revolution to his idea of

the Millennium.[39]

Both Price and Priestley regarded millennial speculations as a worthy pastime. And as Professor Garrett has demonstrated, millennial ideas were common in the eighteenth-century intellectual community. Garrett has pointed to Priestley's identification with a scholarly millennial tradition which originated at Cambridge; Price was in that same tradition of divines and scholars. These Cambridge divines had produced a stream of millennial literature at the close of the seventeenth century. One of these divines, Ralph Cudworth, exerted a profound influence on Price's thinking and it is certain he had read Cudworth on the subject.

As early as 1775, in a letter to Charles Chauncey, Price expressed his thoughts on the future consequences of the Revolution. The Revolution would be the beginning of a "government of perfect peace", in which all would be united.[40] While Price did not explicitly refer to the "Millennium" as that government, there is strong reason

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[39]While the relation of Price's view of the Revolution to his idea of progress has not been studied, Clarke Garrett has written an article relating Priestley's view of the French Revolution to his idea of progress. Cf. Garrett, Journal of the History of Ideas, cited earlier.

[40]Price, "Letter to Chauncey," cited earlier.

(considering other things he had said) to believe that he was referring to that millennial reign of Christ and the Saints spoken of in Revelation. Later in 1777, enthusiastic over the success of the Revolution, Price again turned his thoughts to the future. He spoke of important "circumstances" in the present state of the world that were preparations for a "revolution in favor of human happiness."[41] These "circumstances" had made the present "unspeakably different than it was", revealing man a milder animal, and "the Millennium hastening."[42] While Price did not refer explicitly to the Revolution at this point, considering his view of the importance of that event, it is highly probable that it was one, if not the most important, circumstances of which he spoke.

In 1789, two years before his death, in his famous sermon on the French Revolution, Price referred to the new era, an era which would usher in a new millennial dawn. Price spoke of the approach of this glorious age:

> . . . but the time is I hope, coming when a conviction will prevail, of the folly as well as the iniquity of wars; and when the nations of the earth, happy under just governments, and no longer in danger of the passions of

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[41]Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, pp. 24-25.

[42]Ibid.

> kings, will find out better ways of settling their disputes; and beat (as Isaiah prophesies) their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks.[43]

Because of Price's reference to the traditional millennial passage from Isaiah, it is clear that he was speaking of the Millennium, and he saw its approach in the "near" future. After speaking of this coming age, Price praised America for its role in ushering in the new era.[44] America had been the spark that had ignited Europe into a conflagration that would spread to the rest of the world. In Price's view, America was the portent of its approach.

While the above references laid the basis for a millennial view of the Revolution, by themselves, they would not be sufficient for affirming a millennial interpretation. For the strongest support to this millennial interpretation, one has to turn to a revealing passage in Price's Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution. At the beginning of the Observations, Price again returned to the subject of the Millennium. After referring to a time when religious bigotry would end, knowledge be increased and the "wolf dwell with the lamb and the leopard with the kid" (obvious millennial reference), Price turned his thoughts

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[43]Price, Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 30.

[44]Ibid., p. 50.

to the American Revolution: "It is a conviction I cannot resist, that the independence of the English colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence to introduce these times."[45] It is clear that the "these times" mentioned in the passage was indeed the Millennium and that Price regarded the Revolution as an "introduction" or a "sign" of its fast approach.

In summary, no single event of the eighteenth century encouraged Price more in his thoughts on progress than the American Revolution. In his view, it was one of the most important steps introduced by Providence to facilitate man's advance towards perfection. Before the French Revolution, the Revolution represented the furthest advance in the progress of liberty in modern times. While the Revolution bore great consequence for the present, it was even more consequential in terms of the future. To his death, Price carried the conviction that the Revolution was the harbinger of the most glorious age in human history, the Millennium. However, when Price died in 1791, the Millennium had not arrived. And though the English divine did not live to see the advent of the new age, he gained some consolation by the conviction that he had, in his own small way, somehow hastened its arrival.

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[45]Price, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, p. 7.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to examine Richard Price's idea of historical progress and determine both in what respects his conception held ideas in common with the standard French school and in what respects his idea made significant departures from that tradition. It was argued that while the English thinker had received only a passing notice in the standard histories of progress, Price had made a significant (and in certain respects unique) contribution to the history of the eighteenth-century belief.

It was further argued that the past neglect of Price and other English progressives was primarily due to the predominant French emphasis in Enlightenment historiography. This exclusive French emphasis was at least partially attributed to the widespread acceptance of J.B. Bury's secular definition of the idea of progress. Bury had argued that for a particular conception to be considered a true, "full-fledged" theory of progress, the belief must assert that progress resulted solely from what he called the "psychical and social nature of man."[1] If not, there would be

[1]Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 5.

no appreciable difference between the idea of progress and the belief in Providence. Bury's essentially secular definition limited the scope of his inquiry; while touching briefly on progressive thinkers outside of France, the majority of his work concentrates on French social theorists.

Bury's definition forced the English scholar to exclude from his inquiry all theories based on a supra-historical agency (i.e. Providence) as the source of human progress. One country which produced an unusual number of "spiritual" conceptions of progress was England. Of these essentially Christian formulations of the belief, the most impressive ones came from a small circle of Protestant thinkers that included David Hartley, William Paley, Joseph Priestley and Richard Price. Of the aforementioned group, no single thinker has been neglected more than the Unitarian theologian Price. It was because of this neglect of a thinker called by Condorcet one of the first exponents of the belief in progress, that this study of Price's conception of historical progress was undertaken. At this time, it is necessary to review the major findings of this study, in order to better assess the significance of Price's idea in the eighteenth-century progressive tradition.

In approaching Price's conception of progress, one detects a spirit similar to that which motivated medieval

scholastics such as Thomas Acquinas and Peter Abelard. Just as these thinkers attempted to reconcile their own interpretation of Christianity with Aristotelian reason, Price played a similar role in the eighteenth century--attempting to reconcile his own version of the faith with the Enlightenment belief in human progress. The English divine brought together a strange mixture of the divine and the secular in a manner quite inconceivable to the modern scientific mind. What emerged from this effort was an essentially Christian or spiritual conception of progress which contrasted sharply with the standard French formulations as traced by Bury and other historians.

Nowhere was this contrast more marked than in the English preacher's conception of Providence as the source and guarantor of man's progress and perfectibility. French social thinkers (in particular Saint-Pierre, Turgot and Condorcet) held that man's progress was the sole result of his own effort (what Van Doren calls "anthropogenic" progress). As Sampson stated, the Enlightenment idea of progress was founded on a "shining faith in the perfectibility of man . . . in the natural rights of man founded on human reason."[2]

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[2]Sampson, Progress in the Age of Reason, p. 119.

Price also advanced a strong faith in man's perfectibility, but divine Providence, not man, was its principal source.

Notwithstanding Bury, who argued that the fundamental assumptions of the idea of progress and the belief in Providence were incompatible, Price made his belief in Providence the cornerstone of his theory of human advancement. All history was nothing more than a grand progress forward, presided over and controlled by divine will. Providence secretly and surreptitiously manipulated man's reason and passions to accomplish his progressive ends for mankind. In the last analysis, Price and the other members of the English school fell back on Providence as a divine assurance that man would continue to advance. His belief in Providence marked Price's greatest departure from the secular interpretations of the French school.

The sharp contrast between Price's conception and the standard Enlightenment (French) belief was again evident in his conception of the future state towards which mankind was speeding. The leading French theorists conceived of man's future destination in essentially secular terms, purged of any vestiges of the old faith. While it was true that not all displayed as intransigent an attitude as a Condorcet, most agreed that if mankind was to bask in utopia, Christianity, at least as they understood it, would have to

be relegated to the refuse heap of outworn ideas. For Condorcet, the future would be a time when the "sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason."[3] While Becker and other historians have found in the French idea of progress the residue of Christian eschatology, the leading thinkers were at least consciously irreligious and anti-Christian. Christianity was regarded as the major obstacle or barrier to the advancement of humanity.

In direct opposition to the French view, Price set forth a thoroughly Christian interpretation of the future age; for Price, human progress would come to a glorious end in the throes of the Christian Millennium. As has been emphasized, millennialism was quite common in eighteenth-century thought; however, in combining his millennial beliefs with his conception of human progress, Price broke with the traditional conception. For many, the Millennium meant an end to a despairing temporal existence--to Price it would bring to a close a wonderful period in the history of mankind.

Closely related to his view of the "end" of human progress, was his unique conception of the eighteenth-century

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[3]Condorcet, Outline on the Progress of the Human Mind, p. 179.

doctrine of human perfectibility. As was earlier emphasized, the leading theorists of the belief (both French and English) based their beliefs on a reaffirmation and extension of Locke's tabula rasa psychology. Acceptance of this doctrine (that the mind was a blank tablet on which experience and the environment could write whatever it willed) encouraged the eighteenth-century reformers in their belief that man was infinitely malleable (perfectible). Man was born with no innate ideas of right and wrong; therefore, through planning the environment, man could be molded into a socially and morally superior being.

In direct opposition to this Lockian interpretation of perfectibility, Price offered a theory based on the very innate ideas that Locke had rejected. In opposition to Locke and his disciples, the English divine argued that man's ideas of right and wrong were inborn (innate), and that all men had the capacity to perceive the good (become perfectible). Each individual was equipped with a "faculty", what Price called intuition, which enabled him to know the good. Price further added that (1) it was the will of Providence that all men seek after the good, and (2) that when finding it, they automatically follow it. Price believed that under the proper conditions (the mind cleared of all uneccesary hindrances), most men were capable of perfectibility.

Price's conception of perfectibility (resting on the rejected doctrine of innate ideas) represented a unique contribution to the eighteenth-century belief and marked his chief claim as a seminal Enlightenment theorist. The *a priori* intuitive basis of his conception flew in the face of the prevailing empirical-based theories of the age, including those formulations of Hartley, Priestley, Paley and the English school. While Price shared with his English colleagues most ideas (in particular the belief in divine Providence), his rendering of the doctrine of perfectibility set him apart from them and other eighteenth-century progressive thinkers.

The last problem explored in this study was the relation of Price's interpretation of the American Revolution to his fully-articulated theory of human progress. As in the other elements or properties of his conception, here too, the Christian nature of his belief was illustrated. Price shared with other eighteenth-century progressives a conviction that America (after the Revolution) was both the hope of the future and the proper asylum for all the friends of liberty. Like them, he regarded the era of the Revolution as opening a new and glorious era in the history of mankind. However, in his deep conviction that the Revolution was divinely inspired, and that it signalled the fast

approach of the Millennium, he departed from the more standard secular views of the Revolution.

In conclusion, while Price shared with the French school a common belief in the progress of humanity, the essential Christian features of his belief set him apart from this tradition. The strong Christian underpinnings of his conception marked a major break with the predominantly eudaemonist (temporal) theories of the French thinkers, anticipating to some extent the spiritual progressivism of the nineteenth-century German school. At the same time, his unique interpretation of the doctrine of perfectibility set him apart from the other members of the English school of progress. It is hoped that this study of Price's idea of progress, up to now virtually overlooked, will in some way compensate for this past neglect. It is further hoped that this dissertation will mark the beginning of further needed scholarship on both Price and the English school, of which he was a leading representative.

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