SAMUEL COLMAN

1780 - 1845

Margaret Whidden

Ph.D.

University of Edinburgh

1985

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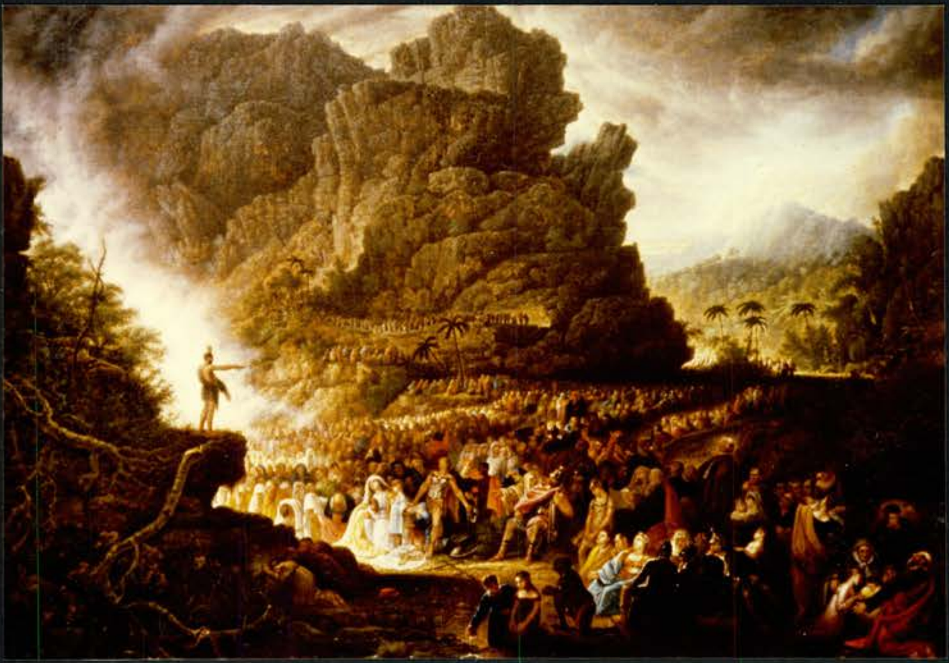

Samuel Colman
St John Preaching in the Wilderness, 1821

ABSTRACT

Because he lived in Bristol between the years 1816 and 1838, Samuel Colman is usually considered a 'Bristol School' artist. Although few biographical details are available about this provincial drawing master, the most important to emerge are those which clarify his religious affiliations and links. Again, while there is little evidence that Colman was closely connected with the other members of the Bristol school, it is clear that he had much in common with them as regards subject matter and sources, and that his work was known to other Bristol artists, and theirs to him. Therefore, while the purpose of this study of Samuel Colman has been to illuminate the work of an apparently very private artist, the result of the research has been to widen the 'picture' of Independency in pre-Victorian Bristol, while adding something to the definition of the 'school' of art which the city produced during that period.

Colman's connections with mainstream Dissent, through his membership of Castle Green and of Zion Independent chapels in Bristol, help us to place him in society locally and give us the touchstones of his interests: evangelism, Abolition, the 'Catholic Question', the Parliamentary redress of Dissenters' political grievances and the 'Prophetical Controversy'. Along with other artists, Colman used favourite genres of the era (the fairground picture, for example, and the biblical cataclysm) in order to present propaganda. But his unique approach to the use of art as a vehicle for dogma and political messages was his fusion of the emblem tradition with the visual formulae adopted by his contemporaries in the 'School of Catastrophe', especially in those paintings where he acknowledged the Sublime through his treatment, in poetic landscapes, of biblical epics and events from the Apocalypse.

Section C demonstrates the lyric qualities Colman obviously admired in the Psalms and in the hymns of English Dissent, particularly the hymnody of Isaac Watts. Finally, Section D shows that Samuel Colman found a consonant synthesis by being both sincere and optimistic in the presentation of his belief in the positive culmination of Salvation history.

CONTENTS

There are two volumes. Pagination is continuous, from one volume to another.

VOLUME ONE

i Abstract

ii Table of Contents

iv List of Illustrations

xiv Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

Section A: Samuel Colman, Artist and Prophet

9 Chapter One: Biography

46 Chapter Two: The Bristol School

76 Chapter Three: The Claims of Dissent

104 Chapter Four: The Picture as Propaganda - the use of the visual arts by Colman and his contemporaries as vehicles for ideas which overlap with Protestant dogma

Section B: The Prophet as Preacher and Politician

160 Chapter Five: A Sermon on St James's Fair

194 Chapter Six: Three Political Issues

Section C: The Prophet as Psalmist

292 Chapter Seven: The Rock of Salvation and the Fountain of Life - Colman's poetic landscapes examined as hymns of praise or prayer

Section D: The Prophet as Apocalyptic Visionary

363 Chapter Eight: The Everlasting Inheritance - Pictorial Metaphors of Christ's Church and the rewards of faith

402 Chapter Nine: The Coming of the Kingdom - Samuel Colman's positive vision of the end of the world and the return of the Sovereign Christ

Appendices

463 Appendix One: Family Tree of Samuel Colman of Bristol

464 Appendix Two: Colman's pamphlet describing St John Preaching in the Wilderness

468 Appendix Three: Newspaper Review of St John Preaching in the Wilderness

473 Bibliography

VOLUME TWO

494 Catalogue

Plates: There are 161 numbered plates, following the catalogue.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The photographs and other reproductions illustrate the work of Samuel Colman unless otherwise stated.

My thanks are due to everyone who helped me to obtain photographs - in particular to Oldham Art Gallery for lending me numerous photographs for reproduction, to Phillips and Jollys, Bath, for their generosity with reproductions of watercolours and drawings, and to John Stafford for his kindness in sending me photographs of details of several paintings. Where the photographs have not come from public galleries or been made with the cooperation of private owners, the sources have been acknowledged in this list.

Illustrations presented with the text

Frontispiece: St John Preaching in the Wilderness, 1821. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

Fig i, (p. 13) Samuel Colman's Trade Card. Avon County Reference Library, Bristol.

Fig ii, (p. 25) Colman's advertisement in The Bristol Mercury, 24 August 1830.

Fig iii, (p. 25) Colman's advertisement in The Bristol Gazette, 26 August 1830.

List of Plates

1 Henry Burns, View of Yeovil Market, c. 1830. Lithograph. Yeovil Museum and Art Gallery.

2 Village Scene, 1804. Ownership unknown. (Photo courtesy of Christie's.)

3 The Death of Amelia, 1804. Tate Gallery, London.

4 William Woollett after Richard Wilson, Celadon and Amelia, 1765. Engraving. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

5 King Lear on the Heath with Edgar and the Fool, c. 1810-20. Ownership unknown. (Photo courtesy of Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co.)

6 St Paul Street, Bristol, showing the house where Colman lived from about 1816 until 1824. (Photo courtesy of City Planning Dept., Bristol.)

7 Rocky Landscape, c. 1815-23. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

8 Mountain Landscape with Large Tree, c. 1815-23. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985. (Photo courtesy of Phillips and Jollys, Bath.)

9 Mountain Landscape with Bridge and Hamlet, c. 1816-24. Private collection, Wiltshire.

10 Burrington Combe, near Langford, c. 1818-24. Private collection, Wiltshire. (Photo courtesy of Phillips and Jollys, Bath.)

11 St John Preaching in the Wilderness, 1821. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

12 Peter Bruegel the Elder, Landscape with River and Mountains, 1553. Drawing. British Museum, London.

13 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Mountain Ravine, 1555. Drawing. Louvre, Paris.

14 John Browne, after Salvator Rosa, St John Preaching in the Wilderness, 1768. Engraving. British Museum, London.

15 J.M.W. Turner, The Upper Falls of the Reichenbach: rainbow, c. 1810. Watercolour. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

16 Francis Danby, Romantic Valley Scene, c. 1823. Wash drawing. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

17 Thomas Cole, St John Preaching in the Wilderness, 1827. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

18 Joseph Anton Koch, Macbeth and the Witches, c. 1834. Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal.

19 Portrait of a Negro Gentleman, early 1820s. (Photo courtesy of Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co.)

20 Portrait of a young man in Highland dress, early 1820s. Dr R.A. McCall Smith, Edinburgh. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

21 Portrait drawing of a young man in Highland costume, early 1820s. Private Collection, Wiltshire. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

22 Tintern Abbey, early 1820s. Private Collection, Switzerland. (Photo courtesy of Hazlitt Gooden & Fox.)

23 J.M.W. Turner, Interior of Tintern Abbey, 1794. Watercolour. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

24 Distant View of Bristol, c. 1822-25. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

25 Sketchbook view of a hamlet with a bottle kiln, c. 1820s. City Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photo, M. Whidden.)

26 Sketchbook drawing of a valley near Bristol, c. 1820s. City Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photo, M. Whidden.)

27 Sketchbook drawing of a boat, trees, and an artist at work, c. 1820s. City Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

28 Sketchbook drawing of boys fishing near a large tree, c. 1820s. City Art Gallery, Bristol (Photo, M. Whidden.)

29 Francis Danby, The Snuff Mill, Stapleton, c. 1820-21. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

30 St James's Fair, 1824. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

31 St James's Fair, 1824. Colour version of Pl. 30.

32 Edward Villiers Rippingille, The Recruiting Party, 1822. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

33 William Hogarth, detail of Plate 1 of The Harlot's Progress, 1732. British Museum, London.

34 T. Gaugain, after Francis Wheatley, Cries of London: Turnips and Carrots. Stipple engraving, published by Colnaghi as Plate 13 in The Itinerant Trades of London, 1797.

35 David and Abigail, c. 1828-30. Christopher Newall, London. (Photo courtesy of Colnaghi.)

36 The Delivery of Israel, 1830. City Art Gallery, Birmingham.

37 The Delivery of Israel, 1830. Colour version of Pl. 36. (Photos for Plates 37-41, courtesy of John Stafford.)

38 Detail of Plate 36. Horse in left foreground.

39 Detail of Plate 36. Fallen warrior.

40 Detail of Plate 36. Group in right foreground.

41 Detail of Plate 36. Moses and the Children of Israel.

42 The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host, c. 1830. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

43 Francis Danby, The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt, 1825. Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston.

44 Francis Danby, Llynydwal, North Wales, c. 1827. Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester.

45 J. Romney after Francis Danby, The Climber of Helvellyn, 1825-29. Engraving. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

46 John Martin, The Destruction of Pharaoh's Hosts, 1830. Watercolour. Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

47 Benjamin West, Pharaoh and his Host Lost in the Red Sea, c. 1792. Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts.

48 John Martin, Joshua, 1820s. Watercolour. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

49 William West, The Israelites Passing through the Wilderness preceded by the Pillar of Light, c. 1845. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

50 F.C. Lewis after J.M.W. Turner, The Field of Waterloo, 1830. Mezzotint. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

51 A Romantic Landscape: David Dancing Before the Ark of the Lord, c. 1830-32. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

52 E. Goodall after Francis Danby, The Embarkation of Cleopatra, 1828. British Museum, London.

53 Belshazzar's Feast, 1831-32. Oldham Art Gallery.

54 Belshazzar's Feast. Colour version of Plate 53.

55 Detail of Plate 53. Foreground group. (Photos for Plates 55-61, courtesy of John Stafford.)

56 Detail of Plate 53. Central table.

57 Detail of Plate 53. Belshazzar.

58 Detail of Plate 53. Cyrus.

59 Detail of Plate 53. The Soothsayers and Daniel.

60 Detail of Plate 53. The handwriting on the wall.

61 Detail of Plate 53. Group at right.

62 John Martin, Belshazzar's Feast, 1832. Mezzotint. British Museum, London.

63 John Martin, Belshazzar's Feast. Diagram from the 1821 'Description'.

64 William Hogarth, Paul Before Felix, 1752. Engraving. British Museum, London.

65 William Hogarth, Garrick in the Character of Richard III, 1746. Engraving. British Museum, London.

66 S.W. Reynolds after Sir Thomas Lawrence, Kemble in the Character of Rolla, 1803. Mezzotint. British Museum, London.

67 Alfred Martin after John Martin, Queen Esther, early 1830s. Mezzotint. Victoria and Albert Museum. An engraving by E. Finden of the same work, was published in 1831 in the Forget-me-Not.

68 John Martin, The Fall of Nineveh, 1829. Mezzotint. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

69 Greg Constantine, Lisa and Leo at Poolside, 1984. Drawing. [See chapter six, footnote 76 for further information].

70 Photograph of Zion Chapel, Bedminster. (Courtesy of City Planning Dept., Bristol.)

71 Zion Chapel, Bedminster. Photograph of the Interior, showing the pulpit and at the left, Hare's memorial. (Courtesy of City Planning Dept., Bristol.)

72 Sunday Morning, Going to Church, c. 1832. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

73 Photograph of Zion Chapel from the position taken by Colman for his painting (Plate 72).

74 Sketchbook view of John Hare's home, Firfield House, early 1830s. City Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

75 Gardens at Firfield, early 1830s. Private collection, Wiltshire.

76 Flowerpiece, probably early 1830s. Private collection, Wiltshire.

77 Young Girl Crossing a Stream, c. 1832-34. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

78 Thomas Gainsborough, A Peasant Girl Gathering Faggots in a Wood, 1782. Manchester City Art Gallery.

79 The Coming of the Messiah and the Destruction of Babylon, c. 1831-32. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

80 Detail of Plate 79. The Messiah. (Photos for Plates 80-84, courtesy of John Stafford.)

81 Detail of Plate 79. The distant scene of destruction.

82 Detail of Plate 79. Christ the Good Shepherd.

83 Detail of Plate 79. The Wilderness.

84 Detail of Plate 79. The Peaceable Kingdom.

85 Samuel Jackson, A Land of Dreams, c. 1832 or earlier. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

86 J.B. Pyne, Imaginary Scene, 1828. The National Trust, Anglesey Abbey, Cambridge.

87 Edward Hicks, The Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch, 1830-40. The Abbey Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia.

88 Charles Heath after William Westall, The Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch, 1813. Engraving. See Chapter Eight, footnote 19.

89 The Destruction of the Temple, c. 1833-35. Tate Gallery, London.

90 Detail of Plate 89. Central background.

91 Detail of Plate 89. The Wise and Foolish Virgins.

92 A Mill, watermarked 1830. Private collection, Bristol. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

93 Winter Scene, s.d. 1833 (or 1835). Ownership unknown. (Photo courtesy of Christie's.)

94 The Tryst, possibly mid 1830s. Ownership unknown. (Photo courtesy of Christopher Newall.)

95 Ploughman, Gray's Elegy, c. 1833-37. Private collection, Bath. (Photo courtesy of Phillips and Jollys, Bath.)

96 Colour version of Plate 95.

97 Drawing related to 'Ploughman' watercolour (Plate 95). Margaret Whidden, Edinburgh.

98 'Lime-Kiln Lane', mid 1830s. Private collection, Wiltshire.

99 Rural scene with women collecting water, mid 1830s. Private collection, Wiltshire.

100 View over a gorge; a man and his dog, with cattle and sheep, mid 1830s. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

101 Nightingale Valley near Bristol, c. mid 1830s. Andrew Wyld Gallery, London. (Photo courtesy of Andrew Wyld.)

102 Nightingale Cottage, near Brislington: sketchbook drawing for watercolour in Plate 101. City Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photo, M. Whidden.)

103 A Lakeland Scene, mid to late 1830s. Thomas Agnew & Sons, Ltd, London. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

104 Sir Edwin Landseer, Landscape in the Lake District, before 1830. Mrs Gilbert Russell.

105 Landscape drawing with artist sketching, mid to late 1830s. Private collection, Bath. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

106 The Vision of St John, mid to late 1830s. Andrew Wyld Gallery, London. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

107 The Vision of St John. Colour detail of Plate 106.

108 Laying the Foundation Stone, 1837. City Art Gallery, Bristol.

109 Sketch for Laying the Foundation Stone, 1836. City Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

110 The Rock of Salvation, 1837. James Mackinnon Gallery, London. (Photo Courtesy of James Mackinnon).

111 Caspar David Friedrich, Das Kreuz an der Ostsee, 1815. Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

112 C.D. Friedrich, Das Kreuz im Gebirge, 1807-1808. Gemaldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden.

113 C.D. Friedrich, Morgen im Riesengebirge, c. 1811. Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

114 C.D. Friedrich, Höhle mit Grabmal, 1807. Kunsthalle, Bremen.

115 C.D. Friedrich, Kruzifix im Tannenwald, c. 1813. Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf.

116 The Edge of Doom, 1836-38. Brooklyn Museum, New York.

117 The Edge of Doom. Black and white version of Plate 116.

118 Francis Danby, An Attempt to Illustrate the Opening of the Sixth Seal, 1828. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

119 J.M.W. Turner, Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus, 1829. National Gallery, London.

120 Greg Constantine, And Every Eye Shall See Him, mid 1970s. (Photo courtesy of the artist.)

121 Portrait of Samuel Watts, Jr., 1839. Yeovil Museum and Art Gallery. (Photo, M. Whidden.)

122 Landscape drawing, with river and cliffs; people gathering nuts, late 1830s to early 1840s. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

123 Figures on a country path, late 1830s to early 1840s. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

124 A man climbing a stile, c. 1840. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

125 The Fountain of Life, c. 1839 or 1840. Thos. Agnew & Sons, Ltd., London. (Photo, M. Whidden.)

126 Johann Hummel, The Granite Dish in the Pleasure Garden, c. 1832. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

127 Francis Danby, The Three Sisters of Phaeton Weeping over the Tomb of their Brother, 1845. Art Gallery of New South Wales.

128 John Martin, Landscape Classical composition, n.d. Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

129 Thomas Cole, The Titan's Goblet, 1833. Metropolitan Museum, New York.

130 The Garden of Eden, c. 1840. Private collection, Hertfordshire.

131 Watercolour study of leaves and flowers, c. 1840. Private collection, Hertfordshire.

132 John Martin, 'Aside the Devil turned for envy', 1827. Mezzotint. Illustration for Milton's Paradise Lost. See Chapter Seven, footnote 44.

133 John Martin, 'She gave him of that fair enticing fruit', 1827. Mezzotint. Illustration for Milton's Paradise Lost. See Chapter Seven, footnote 44.

134 Torrent in a ravine, c. 1838-1842. Private collection, Wiltshire.

135 Men fishing in a fast-flowing stream, c. 1838-42. Private collection, Wiltshire.

136 Rushing stream with overhanging tree, c. 1838-42. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985.

137 Preparatory drawing for The Garden of Eden, c. 1838-42. Private collection, Hertfordshire.

138 Willow and other trees, c. 1838-42. Private collection, Hertfordshire.

139 The Garden of Eden. Black and white version of Plate 130.

140 Psalm 137, 1842-44. Private collection, Wiltshire. (Photo courtesy of the City Art Gallery, Bristol.)

141 Study for Psalm 137. Private collection, Hampshire.

142 T. Williams after John Martin, Psalm 137. Wood engraving, c. 1834, for the Martin-Westall Bible.

143 Large trees on the bank of a river, c. 1842. With David Cross Gallery, Clifton, 1985.

144 The Temple of Flora, c. 1842-44. Tate Gallery, London.

145 The Deluge, 1843 or 44. Private collection, Hampshire.

146 The Deluge. Colour version of Plate 145.

147 Nicolas Poussin, The Deluge ('Winter'), 1660s. Louvre, Paris.

148 J.P. Quilley after J.M.W. Turner, The Deluge, 1828. Mezzotint. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

149 The Wreckers, c. 1843-44. Private collection, Hampshire.

150 The Wreckers. Colour version of Plate 149.

151 John Martin, The Deluge, 1828. Mezzotint. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

152 Oil sketch attributed to Francis Danby, The Deluge, c. 1828. City of York Art Gallery.

153 Francis Danby, The Deluge, 1837-40. Tate Gallery, London.

154 J.M.W. Turner, Shade and Darkness - The Evening of the Deluge, 1843. Tate Gallery, London.

155 The Drowned Maiden. Dr R.A. McCall Smith, Edinburgh. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

156 Howth Light House from the Needles. Margaret Whidden, Edinburgh.

157-160 Four studies of trees, from a book of nine lithographs, c. 1840-44. City Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photos for Plates 157-160, M. Whidden.)

161 Lithograph of a woman on a country path, 1841-44. Phillip and Margaret Whidden, Edinburgh. (Photo courtesy of Phillips & Jollys, Bath.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in Samuel Colman began a number of years ago when my friend Anne Roberts, who knew that I was looking for a subject for research, and who also knew my liking for 'naive' art, sent me a copy of the pamphlet by Ronald Parkinson which was published at the time of the Tate Gallery exhibition of Colman's apocalyptic paintings, in 1976. Since then I have been indebted to many other friends and acquaintances, some of them known only through correspondence. The most crucial help and encouragement has come from my husband, Phillip. However, this thesis would not have been possible without the unfailing 'information and advice service' provided by Francis Greenacre and his assistants at the City Art Gallery, Bristol. John Stafford and his colleagues at Oldham Art Gallery invited me to write the text for a booklet about Colman's Belshazzar's Feast. The booklet was published to coincide with an exhibition held in 1981, and has helped me to make contact with a number of people whose ideas have contributed to my work. I have used material from the booklet in the present text, and gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Oldham Art Gallery.

It goes almost without saying that my thanks are also due to Dr Duncan Macmillan, my adviser in the Department of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh.

Since August 1984 I have received the help of several of the descendants of the artist; they have kindly shared valuable information with me and have allowed me to photograph the watercolours and drawings in their keeping. The Misses Marjory and Winifred Wheeler have been especially generous.

The following is a list (almost certainly incomplete) of those individuals to whom I owe most in my 'search for Samuel Colman':
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INTRODUCTION

Visitors to the City Art Gallery in Bristol who study the work of Francis Danby and the Bristol School of the early nineteenth century must often find themselves introduced unexpectedly to the paradoxical collection of paintings by Samuel Colman. Colman is shown in some of these nine pictures to have been a landscapist who chose to paint local views and current events. Like other Bristol artists of the same period he was also a genre painter; and by his own account (his trade card kept in the Bristol Reference Library) Colman was a drawing master and portrait painter. There is a small portrait by him in the Yeovil Art Museum. His paintings look like the work of a modest provincial artist, perhaps self-taught. Certainly Colman had an old-fashioned eye for nature, and his figures, while often charmingly naive, are awkward enough to leave the viewer in no doubt as to the artist's lack of training in the principles of anatomy.

Along with the many unsophisticated painters of his day, Colman clearly took inspiration from masterpieces known to him in the form of engravings. Witness, for instance (turning again to the Bristol group of paintings) his St. James's Fair, which pays visual tribute to famous prints after Hogarth and Francis Wheatley, or his Young Girl Crossing a Stream, which closely resembles two of Gainsborough's 'fancy pictures'. The Romantic Scene, with its classical temple and rose-pink light, is evidence of Colman's admiration for Claude Lorrain. None of this borrowing is unusual or unexpected. In fact it ties in comfortably with the discovery (elsewhere) of paintings by Colman which indicate his familiarity with Shakespeare and his illustrators (perhaps known to the Bristol artist through Boydell's celebrated collection of prints) and with such well-known poets as James Thomson.[1] What is puzzling and surprising in Bristol is the appearance among Colman's paintings of two canvases which strikingly and unconventionally depict religious subject-matter. These paintings have been called The Coming of the Messiah and the Destruction of Babylon and The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host. They can be linked, in terms of their style, apocalyptic themes and iconographic minutiae, to four other paintings in four widely separated galleries. These pictures combine to suggest that the modest West-country drawing-master was also a creative subject-painter on quite an ambitious scale. They show Colman tackling the cataclysmic themes admired in the Capital with a confidence and an attention to detail attesting to conviction - to a sincere interest in the subject-matter clearly of more consequence to the painter than his limited ability to achieve pictorial credibility.

As I shall demonstrate in the catalogue, these paintings are pictures without pedigrees; they have emerged from almost absolute obscurity into the salerooms and exhibition halls of the twentieth century. Carrying his signature or the clear marks of his brush, the paintings are impressive testimonials to the personality and purposes of their author. Examined with due attention to the very few documents about Colman which survive, these pictures introduce a chapter in art history which has been virtually unopened until now.

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[1] Details of Colman's sources are given in brief in the catalogue, if they are not discussed in the text.

Ten years ago Samuel Colman was almost completely unknown. Somewhat fewer than a dozen of his paintings were recognized as his. Others were wrongly attributed to John Martin or Francis Danby, or were confused in the saleroom with the work of the American landscapist, Samuel Colman (1832-1920) and sold in the United States.[2] Fortunately research by Eric Adams into the poetic landscape painters of Bristol, and the perspicacity of Francis Greenacre and others at the City Art Gallery in Bristol, during the past decade, have resulted in the acquisition of a number of paintings by Colman - not only for Bristol's art gallery, but also for the Tate Gallery in London. When The Destruction of the Temple was identified as a Colman and bought by the Tate in 1975, four large, strange, intriguing paintings of cataclysmic events, all ascribed to Colman, were at this stage known to exist. The others were: The Coming of the Messiah and the Destruction of Babylon (purchased by the City Art Gallery, Bristol, in 1973); The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt (given to the City Art Gallery, Birmingham, in 1950 and recognized as Colman's work in 1962 by Dr. Adams); The Edge of Doom (Brooklyn Museum, New York). These four pictures were brought together at the Tate Gallery in 1976 in an exhibition organized by Ronald Parkinson and called Samuel Colman: Four Apocalyptic Themes. The show was an eye-opener. The four big pictures displayed quite clearly that their maker was not simply a provincial imitator of Martin or Danby, capable of nice little landscapes, moralizing genre pieces and the occasional flight of eccentric fancy. Though often showing his debt to other artists, Colman's pictures could also be 'astonishingly original in conception', as Mr. Parkinson pointed out in the exhibition catalogue, noting at the same time that the very naivety of the semi-transparent figures and flimsy architectural settings 'serves to heighten the drama of his narrative and emphasise the commitment he evidently felt for his subjects'.[3]

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[2] Some of these paintings have returned to Britain. They include Bristol's Coming of the Messiah and the Distant View of Bristol, now also in the City Art Gallery, Bristol. Undoubtedly other Bristol Colman pictures have slipped away undetected across the Atlantic under assumed nationality.

This commitment, this obvious involvement with his biblical themes, sets Colman apart from Danby and Martin and from many other members of the 'school of catastrophe' who were often simply catering to popular taste. John Martin issued various pamphlets or guides to his huge paintings of biblical events. Colman also published a leaflet to assist those who came to view his picture of St John Preaching in the Wilderness.[4] However, his pamphlet has the tone of a religious tract or sermon; and it is as sermons that we ought to regard many of his paintings.

If Samuel Colman had had an 'obscurity agent', he could hardly have remained more mysterious. He lived in Bristol for many years of his working life but, apart from the trade card mentioned above, a puzzling newspaper announcement and brief entries in directories and electoral registers, he left virtually no traces of his secular activities.

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[3] Ronald Parkinson, Samuel Colman: Four Apocalyptic Themes (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1976), [p. 4]. Since 1976 Belshazzar's Feast (Oldham Art Gallery) has been recognized as a fifth in this group of major paintings.

[4] This painting is now in the City Art Gallery, Bristol.

Hardly anything is known about him as a personality. We have no portrait of him; no letters from him are so far known to survive; and his work was largely ignored by the newspapers and journals of his own day, so that there is very little in the way of contemporary judgement of his paintings to help us understand his place within the Romantic movement, or even his status as an artist in Bristol. Of enormous help to Colman scholars, therefore, was the appearance in the 'marketplace' of a large number of watercolours, drawings and lithographs by Colman (with the addition of a few drawings by his daughters). These were brought to Phillips and Jollys in Bath in the summer of 1984, and before their sale by auction in late October I was able to meet the owners and to establish that they are direct descendants of Samuel Colman. The watercolours and sketches confirm the suggestions of the artist's interests and abilities given by the oil paintings. They help to place some paintings chronologically. And they point quite clearly to the artist's habit of expressing his literary and theological ideas as poetic landscape, within the parameters of the Romantic movement in general and of the Bristol school specifically.

In September 1985 a packet of letters came to light (again belonging to a descendant of Colman). These were written to the artist and, with the exception of a short note, they are all from one correspondent who was evidently in the habit of buying from Colman.

Nevertheless, at present we do not know the name of even a single original buyer of any of Colman's major pictures.

What has emerged as the result of events in recent years and as the outcome of my research is the fact that Colman was a Dissenter, a member of a rather prominent Independent chapel in Bristol. Though by no means clarifying all the complex imagery in his paintings, this discovery does help to explain Colman's insistence on prophetic themes and on what appear to be anti-establishment statements in his major works. Colman's nonconformism is crucially important, and what we know of the climate of belief in which he lived and laboured must be recollected whenever we attempt to analyse one of his pictures.

Samuel Colman deserves attention as a social phenomenon in the England of the first half of the nineteenth century; he appears to have been unique, among active mainstream Dissenters, in both earning his living as a painter and in expressing his beliefs through his art. It must be emphasized that although these pictures engage all the properties used in the popular 'stage apocalypse' presented by John Martin and his rivals and give a superficial suggestion of either commercial opportunism or of untoward sectarian eccentricity, neither categorization is at all likely to be appropriate. If careful inpsection of Colman's work is made in the light of some understanding of the religious and political views of Independents among his Bristol contemporaries, this reveals that the vivid imagery of the paintings, the artist's use of biblical symbols and his choice of subjects from books of Bible history and prophecy make Colman's pictures expressions of normal traditional and current Independent belief; and they should be read as sermons. For twentieth century viewers they are more difficult to understand than a sermon because the limitations of space forced the artist to attempt to contain many incidents within one small area of canvas. He also used elaborate metaphors to convey his meaning and to assign to one 'cast' of images several 'roles' for interpretation. However, Colman's fellow Dissenters were reared on Pilgrim's Progress and on visual symbolism presented to them (rather primitively) in popular books of religious and moral emblems and would not have had very much difficulty in understanding Colman's use of religious symbols, or his employment of biblical characters as metaphors for actors on the stage of contemporary politics.

My study of Samuel Colman's paintings is structured in part by their various associations with the major concerns of orthodox Dissenters during the artist's lifetime: evangelism, the slave trade, the relief of political disabilities experienced by Dissenters, Catholic emancipation, and Parliamentary reform. Over the years many students of English history have examined the position of Dissent within the context of the social and political changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[5] In looking yet again at nonconformists as dissidents I have been attempting to illuminate and understand the work of one apparently very private and very religious artist. And conversely, the processes of looking closely at Samuel Colman's paintings and of standing back to compare their imagery and general content with that of the paintings of other Romantic landscapists have, as it were, placed a filter of a new colour over our picture of Dissenters in England and, in particular, over Independents in Bristol.

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[5] See Bibliography for a selection of references.

SECTION A

Samuel Colman: Artist and Prophet

CHAPTER ONE

Biography

Samuel Colman was born in September 1780, but his recorded life story begins with the day thirty-three years later when he was baptised at the Independent Chapel in Yeovil, Somerset. The minister, the Revd R. Taylor, wrote in the chapel register: 'Samuel son of Robert and Mary Colman was born in the month of September 1780 and baptised by me the 12th day of August 1813'.[1] This is the only definite clue to the artist's parentage which has come to light. It leaves open to speculation all questions about his place of birth, his upbringing and early religious affiliations and his training as a painter.

The adult baptism of the artist, unusual in a congregation which practised infant christening, would seem to have been associated with his marriage and with a wish or need to please his bride's family. On September 23, 1813, less than six weeks after his baptism, he was married to Mary Cayme, daughter of James Cayme of Yeovil, a founder member of the Princes Street Chapel.[2] Witnesses to the ceremony were William Cayme and Mary Glyde.

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[1] Register of the Princes Street Independent Chapel, Yeovil, held in the Public Record Office, London - RG/4 1793.

[2] James Cayme was one of the eight signatories to a document of 1793, entered in the Registry of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, requesting the Bishop's permission for the establishment of an Independent Chapel in Princes Street, Yeovil.

Wherever he may have come from, Samuel Colman seems to have been established in Yeovil at the time of his marriage. In those days weddings of everyone except Quakers and Jews were required by law to be performed by a parish priest; so Samuel and Mary were married by the curate of St John's Church in Yeovil, the Revd Thomas Tomkins. In the parish register he noted that the ceremony was carried out by licence and that both the bride and groom were of the parish of Yeovil.[3] The two local newspapers, the Western Flying Post and the Dorchester and Sherborne Journal, printed marriage notices, simply describing Samuel as 'Mr. Colman, artist' and his wife as 'youngest daughter of Mr. James Cayme'.[4]

Lying in a wide valley in eastern Somerset, close to the Dorset border, Yeovil is a substantial market town with a long history. In Domesday Book it is named Givele and Ivle (meaning 'river' in Saxon). The surrounding countryside is fertile and in Colman's day it supported sheep farming and tanning, and a thriving business in leather goods, especially gloves. On Fridays the market drew dealers in corn, cattle, pigs and hemp. The linen industry was of considerable importance in Yeovil until competition in Ulster forced the Somerset manufacturers out of business.

The Caymes of Yeovil were part of this early 19th century prosperity as dealers in malt and makers of linen products. In 1797

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3. The original Yeovil Parish Register is kept by the vicar of St John's and the bishop's transcript of it is held in the Somerset Record Office, Taunton.

4 Western Flying Post, or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury, Monday, 4 October 1813, p. 4, col. 4, and Dorchester and Sherborne Journal and West of England Advertiser, Friday, 8 October 1813, p. 3, col. 5.

William Cayme was advertising in the Universal British Directory as a sail-cloth and dowlas manufacturer, and James Cayme was described as a 'dowlas and tick' maker. Pigot's National Commercial Directory for 1822 contained an entry for James Cayme, dowlas manufacturer, of Wine Street, Yeovil. This may have referred either to James Cayme, Sr. (Mary Colman's father) who died in 1825, or to his son, James Jr., who was married to Grace Glyde, and who died in 1824.[5] In June, 1812, the Western Flying Post[6] reported:

> The Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, in London, have been pleased to adjudge to Messrs Robert and Giles Cayme [nephews of William Cayme and therefore almost certainly close relatives of Mary Colman] . . . of Yeovil, Somersetshire, their gold medal, for the Manufacture of Sail Cloth, proper for the use of the Royal Navy, and superior to the best Dutch. The said gold medal was presented to them by his Grace the Duke of Norfolk, the 26th of May last.

The Glydes were also prominent among the business folk of Yeovil. Maltsters, tea merchants and grocers, they were connected by marriage with the Caymes, and the Book of Baptisms of the Independent Chapel contains the names of the many children born into the two 'clans' in the first decade or so of the nineteenth century. An old lithograph of Yeovil Market Place by Henry Burns (Pl. 1) gives a glimpse of the town as it was in about 1830, with the name Glyde displayed prominently above the windows of one of the shops.

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[5] The Independent Chapel Register, referred to in Note 1, above, provides details of the dates of these deaths and of the baptisms of the six children of James Cayme, Jr. It would appear that James eventually failed in business - or at least in one enterprise, for the Bristol Mercury gives the names of 'J. Cayme, Jr. & T.B. Watts, Yeovil, spirit-merchants' in a list of bankrupts published on 21 October 1822 (p. 2, col. 5).

[6] 8 June, p. 4, col. 3. William Cayme's will (of which there is an estate duty copy in the Somerset Record Office - DD/ED 26/944) made in 1818, lists a large number of legatees, including Robert and Giles Cayme and many other members of the extended family of Caymes and Glydes.

Yeovil was dominated in Colman's day (as it is still) by the fourteenth century parish church of St John the Baptist, the 'Lantern of the West' - so named because of the brightness of its magnificent Perpendicular windows. The patronage of the living was in the control of the Phelips family of Montacute House. The Reverend William Phelips was vicar of St John's from 1780 to 1807; and from 1815 to 1855 another member of the family, Robert Phelips, held the position. At the time of Colman's marriage the Revd Elias Taylor was vicar. His curate, Revd Tomkins, was in charge of the nearby Bluecoat School.

The picture of Yeovil in the early nineteenth century can be brought into clearer focus by examining once again the pages of the Western Flying Post. An entry for 27 September 1813, indicates that Messrs R. and G. Cayme of Yeovil were then agents for the Phoenix fire office. On March 9 of the previous year, Messrs S. and J. Watts of Yeovil, solicitors and land agents, were selling 'a quantity of excellent dung'. In the same issue of the newspaper there appeared an advertisement from one B. S. Lane, drawing the attention of the public to his new book, Mene! Mene! Tekel! Upharsin! The wonder at an end and the False Prophetess Detected! Or, Joanna Southcott Weighed in the Balances and Found Wanting. The book was on sale 'at the Author's opposite the Post Office, Yeovil'.

On 16 March 1812, there appeared the following attractive advertisement: 'Wanted, in a Dissenting Family, at Lady Day, A Good Plain Cook, where one cow is kept. Her character must be such as will bear the strictest investigation'. The same newspaper (4 May 1812) solicited subscriptions toward the publication of a print by Charles Heath of 'Mr. West's Picture of Our Saviour Healing the Sick in the Temple'; and on 11 May came the announcement from Chard (Somerset) that 'Mrs. Rio is lately returned from London with her usual fashionable assortment of Millinary and Drapery Goods'. The people of Yeovil, though they may have held 'good plain' values, were also keeping an eye on London goings-on, it seems - including events of religious and artistic interest.

London is 125 miles from Yeovil. Bristol is just forty miles away, to the north, across the Mendip hills via Shepton Mallet. In 1813 there was almost certainly regular and frequent public transport to Bristol by the mail coach.[7]

If Colman wanted to move out of Yeovil in search of work, but also wished to stay within a relatively comfortable travelling distance from Yeovil, it is not surprising that he should choose to seek his fortune in Bristol, rather than in London. Where he first lived after his marriage still remains a mystery, but by 1816 Colman

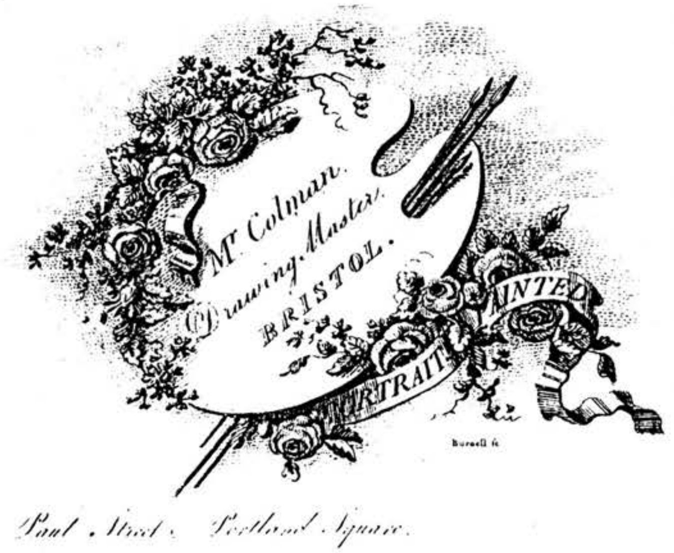

Fig. 1 Samuel Colman's trade card. Avon County Reference Library - B 9493

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[7] Pigot's National Commercial Directory for 'Somersetshire', 1822, advertises a Bristol coach leaving the Choughs Inn at Yeovil on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 12.30pm.

(still sometimes spelled 'Coleman') was advertising in the Bristol trades directories as a portrait painter and drawing master.

What qualifications had Colman demonstrated by 1816 to justify his advertising as a professional artist and teacher in Bristol?

The Village Scene (Pl. 2) sold at Christie's on 10 February 1967, is one of only two examples of Colman's work known, by their inscriptions, to date from his pre-Bristol years. The picture is signed and dated 1804 and is a view of a country market with peasants and animals. The style is conservative and the general composition is not unlike the work of George Morland. Though the landscape is sensitive, the figures are awkward to the point of ineptness - rather surprising in the work of a man of twenty-four. Was he perhaps a 'gentleman' who made a profession out of an earlier hobby? Or was he a craftsman who developed ambitions to rise higher in 'the art'? Since there is no record of his apprenticeship one is tempted to toy with the idea that Colman originally trained for a profession - the ministry, for example - but turned to art relatively late in life for reasons as yet undiscovered.

The Death of Amelia (Pl. 3, Tate Gallery) is also inscribed 1804. With its literary associations (illustrating an episode from 'Summer' in Thomson's Seasons) and its compositional similarities to pictures of the same subject by Wilson and Fuseli, this painting suggests that Colman was interested in popular romantic themes as well as 'genre'. King Lear on the Heath (Sotheby Parke Bernet, 23 November 1977) is a signed but undated Colman showing the same characteristically small and flimsy human figures at odds with the angry and extravagant forces of Nature (Pl. 5).

In 1816 Colman and his wife were living at No. 16 Paul Street (now St Paul Street), off Portland Square, then a rather pleasant street; now it is sadly in need of restoration.[8] The square itself was still in the process of being built in 1816, though the handsome church of St Paul had been completed in 1794.[9]

According to the 1811 census, Bristol and its suburbs contained a population of 76,433. 'Bedminster, excluded by the eccentric enumerator', says John Latimer in his Annals of Bristol, 'had 4,577 souls'. The same chronicler adds that 'the increase over 1801 was greater in Bristol than in any provincial town except Liverpool and Manchester'.[10]

During Colman's first years of residence in Bristol important social changes were taking place as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The macadamization of roads began in 1815, when J.L. McAdam was appointed Surveyor of the roads under the control of the Bristol Turnpike Trustees. In 1816 the Bristol Gas Company was established, with Mr Briellat of Broadmead as manager of the new enterprise. In 1811, according to Latimer, 'After having lighted up his shop, Mr Briellat set up a few lamps in the street . . . giving Bristol precedency over London in the use of gas for thoroughfares, the first experiment of the same kind in the metropolis being made at Westminster Bridge in 1812'.[11] The citizenry of Bristol were not as full of admiration for the new form of illumination as Mr Briellat might have hoped. Gas lights were found to be smelly and rather weak. However, by 1817 the principal streets of the city had been fitted out with gas lamps. During the same years waterpipes were laid to carry supplies from Sion spring to most of the houses in the neighbourhood. The water carrier with his cart would soon disappear from the streets. And in 1813 the port of Bristol was visited for the first time by a steamboat. Like gas lighting in the streets, steam power on the Severn estuary was resisted by Bristolians, but by 1817 a successful steam packet - the Britannia - was plying across the Bristol Channel from Swansea.

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[8] No. 16 is now No. 12. See Plate 6.

[9] See A. Gomme et alia, Bristol: An Architectural History (London, 1979), p. 176.

[10] John Latimer, Annals of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century (Bristol, 1887), p. 42.

[11] Latimer, p. 43.

Meanwhile, in July 1816, the city received a visit from the Duke of Wellington, hero of the country's recent victory over Napoleon. Bristol accorded the duke a splendid procession through the streets, a type of general entertainment by which a mood of euphoria might be extended to include even the city's poor.

The journals of the period refer to entertainments of quite different kinds - ranging from 'sacred concerts', plays and exhibitions of paintings, to bull-baiting (practised in Bristol up to 1822), the popular diorama and the annual fair held in St James's churchyard. During the twenty-two years that Colman is known to have lived in Bristol the city continued to grow and to change. The age of the railway was entered upon; a cholera epidemic broke out; the future Queen Victoria visited the town. In 1821 the population of Bristol was 87,779 and in 1831 it was 103,886.[12] 1831 was marked by the famous Reform riots in which the Bishop's Palace and many other important buildings in Bristol were burned to the ground by the volatile mob of the town. When the Reform Bill finally became law in 1832, giving the power to vote to every householder in the towns whose assessed rental was £10 or more annually, Samuel Colman's name was entered in the Register of Bristol Electors - number 3175 in the Parish of St Paul.

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[12] The census findings of 1821 and 1831 are discussed by Latimer.

The life of Samuel Colman in Bristol, and his artistic progress there, remain almost as much a mystery as the name of his birthplace or his reasons for moving to Bristol in the first instance.

The earliest signed and dated painting from his Bristol years is Colman's St John Preaching in the Wilderness (City Art Gallery, Bristol, Pl. 11) which is signed 'S. Colman' and inscribed with the date 1821. This oil painting must have been shown to the public that year because it was reviewed in the Bristol Mercury of Saturday, 25 August 1821. (See Appendix Three.) The lengthy column on page three, signed by 'Philographicus', is such a scathing put-down that it is something of a surprise to learn that Colman found the courage to present the picture to the selection committee of the Royal Academy the following season. The fate of St John Preaching at the Academy is not known, apart from the fact that it was exhibited in 1822 as Number '558*'. Ironically, the various editions of the R.A. Catalogue for 1822 confuse Samuel Colman with another artist, Edward Coleman of Birmingham. In the 'List of Exhibitors, 1822' Samuel Colman is not mentioned, but Edward Coleman is credited with two addresses - his Birmingham address and also '36, Piccadilly'. The London address may have been lodgings taken by Samuel Colman during a visit to London. The 'List of Exhibitors' states that Catalogue No. 558* was one of Edward Coleman's entries. However, Edward Coleman was known for his studies of dead game; a landscape with St John preaching would have been a most unlikely subject for him. One edition of the Academy catalogue clears up the mystery, for it reads, as a description of No. 558*: 'St. John Preaching in the Wilderness:- St. Luke, chap. iii S. Coleman'.[13] For Samuel Colman, public attention does not seem to have been won without pain.

Aside from its intrinsic merits or faults, this picture is worth examining if only because it is the one painting for which the artist left a commentary. This takes the form of a pamphlet, printed in Bristol by J.M. Gutch of Small Street: *A Description of Mr. Colman's Picture of St. John Preaching in the Wilderness: Taken from the Third Chapter of St. Luke.*[14] The pamphlet and his will are the only documents prepared by the artist which have come down to us - and the will hardly counts, as it follows a standard legal formula. The pamphlet is interesting, and its full text appears in Appendix Two. It will also be discussed later in this study as a measure, however incomplete, of Colman's attitudes to contemporary aesthetic theory and to the visual interpretation of the Bible.

As regards Colman's religious interests in the early 1820s there is one little scrap of documentary evidence - apart from *St John Preaching* and the sermon-pamphlet. In the 1820s and 1830s there were several Independent chapels in Bristol (five, to be precise, at the time the Bristol Congregational Union was set up in 1833). At least as early as 1821 Samuel and Mary Colman were members of Castle Green Independent

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[13] The Royal Academy Library holds copies of the various editions of the 1822 catalogue.

[14] There is only one known copy of the pamphlet. This is in the Avon County Reference Library - B 9493.

Chapel. A 'Schedule of Deeds Relating to Castle Green Meeting', dated 31 October 1821 (in the keeping of Messrs Page & Co., Solicitors, Bristol) carries the name of the chapel's minister, The Revd William Thorp, and a number of other men, including 'Samuel Coleman'. The Revd Thorp, pastor of Castle Green from January, 1806 until his death in May 1833, will make his appearance again in later chapters, for he was a powerful personality whose opinions on politics and on prophecy are worth considering in detail.

Five of the six surviving letters to Samuel Colman date from the early 1820s. These show that the artist did not cut his ties with Somerset and Dorset by moving to Bristol, for the letters were written by the Revd Harry Farr Yeatman (1786-1861) of Stock Gaylard, near Sturminster Newton in Dorset, where his family had been landowners since the reign of Henry VI. From his correspondence, it seems that Revd Yeatman knew Colman well and was in the habit of entertaining him while he worked on commissions. The first letter, dated 9 June 1821, tells the painter that Mrs Wolcott (probably the writer's mother-in-law) is 'much pleased' with a picture which is 'now safely hung up' in her drawing room, and expresses the hope that Colman will be with him at Stock House, 'about the end of the month'.

Another letter, undated, and musing on matters of money, health and 'presumptuous sins', tells Colman, 'Should you be disposed to cool yourself this summer under the shades of these oaks I shall be truly glad to see you; as indeed I shall be at all times'.

On 4 November 1823, however, Yeatman was writing to urge Colman to complete a painting of 'the Little Mare and Hounds', telling the artist, 'it is a source of great inconvenience to me not to have received' it, and asking for the exact size so that he could have a frame prepared. Colman apparently sent off several pictures to Yeatman, following this appeal. The response from his patron told him 'the Landscapes are beautiful and much admired; it is with pain, & sincere regret that I cannot say the same of the Little Mare & Hounds. I am quite convinced and ever have been that no artist can paint correctly unless he paints from nature - from the living object before him - not from recollection'. Revd Yeatman was, as he points out, a 'sportsman'. He kept his own pack of hounds and therefore felt at liberty to point to specific 'defects' in Colman's treatment of these animals in the painting. The mare too, suffered from 'an immoderate length of neck, and more leg than she really does or ought to possess; as well as too short, & thin a tail'. Then too, the background was 'rocky and picturesque, but not ground on which Hounds can travel'; and it showed summer foliage instead of appropriate hunting-season vegetation. Clearly Colman was the wrong man for the job in hand on this occasion - especially as Revd Yeatman intended the picture for reproduction in the Sporting Magazine (where it never appeared, one need hardly add).

Reading this, one feels rather sorry, not only for the patron who made the wrong choice of limner for the work in hand, but also for Colman, who was evidently forced to try to earn a part of his living by doing work of this kind. I am reminded by this of the pleasant, philanthropic artist in Wilkie Collins's novel, Hide and Seek - Valentine Blyth. This painter went about the country carrying out small commissions for portraits of children and of horses - which he found extremely difficult to cope with. He also sold landscapes. But his spare time at his London home was taken up in the production of large mythological pictures which he exhibited to his friends, including an ancient aristocrat who insisted on making Blyth's servants come into the studio to listen to his 'improving' lecture about the paintings.

Returning to Revd Yeatman, one finds that what appears to be the final letter of the five is dated 9 December 1823. This apologizes for the 'unhappiness' he has caused by his criticisms. Changing his tone about the 'Little Mare', Yeatman says she is 'executed with a Master's hand: and with only a few hairs added to the tail will be as perfect a likeness as I could wish'. He urges Colman to come to visit him on 1st January: 'a little fresh air - a ride with me on the Downs - a little calm reflection on the propriety of all that I have said, will I am sure remove all irritation from the mind of a man so fortified by sense and religion as you are'.

This tantalizing group of letters leads to a number of questions about the fate of the landscapes mentioned by Mr Yeatman. They are no longer at Stock Gaylard, although, according to a present-day representative of the family, a Colman oil painting of the house and its parkland from across the lake is in the keeping of yet another family member. An arrangement among his relatives after the death of the Revd Harry Farr Yeatman involved the transference of such possessions to another house and their further removal or dispersal in later years. More enquiries are proceeding and may be fruitful. Meantime, it is important to know that Colman was in contact with such a man as Revd Yeatman. Not only was this friend a buyer of pictures; he was a likely source of introductions for the painter to other members of the gentry in southwest England, for he was a man of considerable standing, holding a degree in law and the position of Chairman of the Dorset County Sessions Courts.

Besides sport he was interested in poetry; 'Brent Knoll', a long scholarly poem reflecting on his childhood haunts in Somerset, was published in 1817. Apart from helping Colman to find commissions, this patron may have made his own library available to the painter. Therefore, to this rather surprising link with a Church of England patron, may be due some of the complexity of Colman's iconography.

On stylistic grounds, the Distant View of Bristol (City Art Gallery, Bristol, Pl. 24) may be dated to about 1822-25. This is a pleasantly autumnal landscape, focused on the middle distance and on the carefully detailed wild flowers and hedgerow foliage in the foreground. The brushwork is lighter and the colouring less dense than in St John Preaching and (in spite of the rather stolid, conventionalized trees) the effect is of a believable scene - actual hillsides and fields, real chimneys, and real horses pulling a yellow coach. The sky is softly overcast and the distant city mentioned rather than described by the artist. If, as I am reliably informed, the view is vague and inaccurate as a record of Bristol, it is nevertheless sufficiently naturalistic to have led critics to believe for some years that Colman must have spent time going out sketching and that he could and did produce work which was very different from the majority of his imaginative subject pictures. This belief was certainly borne out when the artist's sketchbook (now also in the City Art Gallery) came to light in 1984, along with a number of naturalistic watercolours.

It is possible that Colman had a 'verismo' period, dating, let us say, from soon after his arrival in Bristol and continuing with some interruption - for the painting of St John Preaching, for example - until the late 1820s. These would have been years of experimentation, leading him up to the time when he began to tackle complex themes inspired by current interest in the Apocalypse.

The most carefully finished of Colman's paintings is St James's Fair (Pls. 30 and 31). Signed and dated 1824, this picture is obviously a showpiece and may well be the Fair included in 1832 in the exhibition organized by the Society of Bristol Artists. In general appearance it is a close relative of the work of other Bristol painters; and in choosing to paint the fair Colman was adding his voice to the many local criticisms of the Bristol Fair at this period. It is not known when he first exhibited this painting, but the Bristol Mirror of 4 December 1824, published his name in the list of those then showing their work at the first exhibition of Bristol artists at the city's Institution. At some time during 1824 the Colman family moved from No. 16 St Paul Street to a house across the road at No. 7.[15]

We have the evidence of a coloured aquatint that it was also about this time that Colman sketched a charming scene showing 'charvolants travelling in various directions with the same winds'.[16] These sleigh-like carriages, propelled by kites, were invented by Bristol schoolmaster, George Pocock. After experiments in Britol in the early 1820s, Pocock demonstrated the paces of his 'charvolants' in other parts of the country. In 1828, for instance, he showed them off at Ascot in front of George IV.

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[15] No. 7 is now No. 13. Colman's name appeared regularly in the Annual Bristol Directory published by Mathews, which gave No. 16 as his address in the 1824 edition, while subsequent editions (up to and inlcuding 1838) gave the number as 7.

[16] The scene was engraved, after Colman, by P. Roberts and published in 1827 by Sherwood and Company. There is a black and white reproduction in Rose Macaulay, Life Among the English (London, 1942), p. 38, and a copy of the print itself in the collection of the City Art Gallery, Bristol.

About 1825 or 1826 the Colmans had a son, but the single existing reference to the child is the notice of his burial at the age of 'about two' at the Friars', a Quaker cemetery. The Burial Book of the Friends' Quarterly Meeting of Bristol and Somerset contains an entry for the 26th day of the third month, 1828, indicating that William Scott Colman died on the 21st day of the same month and that his parents, Samuel and Mary, were not members of the Society.[17]

In the late summer of 1830 Samuel Colman placed an advertisement in several Bristol newspapers. This is the most tantalizing of all the scraps of information about him. In the Bristol Mercury the announcement (Fig. 2) reads:

> The ISRAELITES' PASSAGE through the RED SEA, with the OVERTHROW of PHARAOH and his HOST. A Picture, painted from this subject by SAMUEL COLMAN, under very peculiar circumstances, is now Exhibiting at No. 7, PAUL-STREET, St. Pauls, from Ten till Dusk. Admission, One Shilling.

A slightly different version was printed in the Bristol Gazette, and this is shown in Figure 3. The subject of the panorama which is heralded in the next notice was very popular.

The painting being exhibited was almost certainly the large picture now in the Birmingham Art Gallery and known as The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt (Plate 36). The importance of this work and of the four other big apocalyptic oil paintings which are now known to exist, is certainly enhanced by the oddity of the original publicity.

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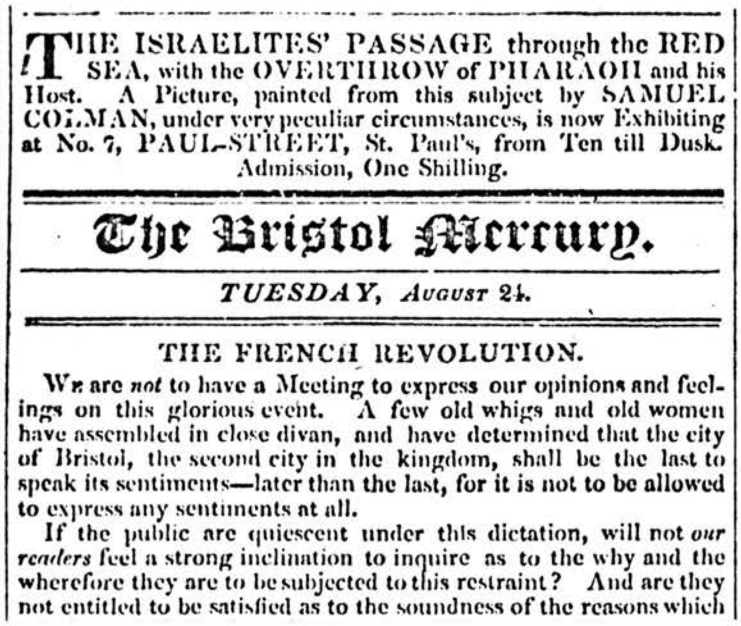
[17] Bristol Record Office - SF/R1/5 (Book 114, p. 113).

The 'very peculiar circumstances' remain shrouded in obscurity; any one



THE ISRAELITES' PASSAGE through the RED SEA, with the OVERTHROW of PHARAOH and his Host. A Picture, painted from this subject by SAMUEL COLMAN, under very peculiar circumstances, is now Exhibiting at No. 7, PAUL-STREET, St. Paul's, from Ten till Dusk. Admission, One Shilling.

The Bristol Mercury.

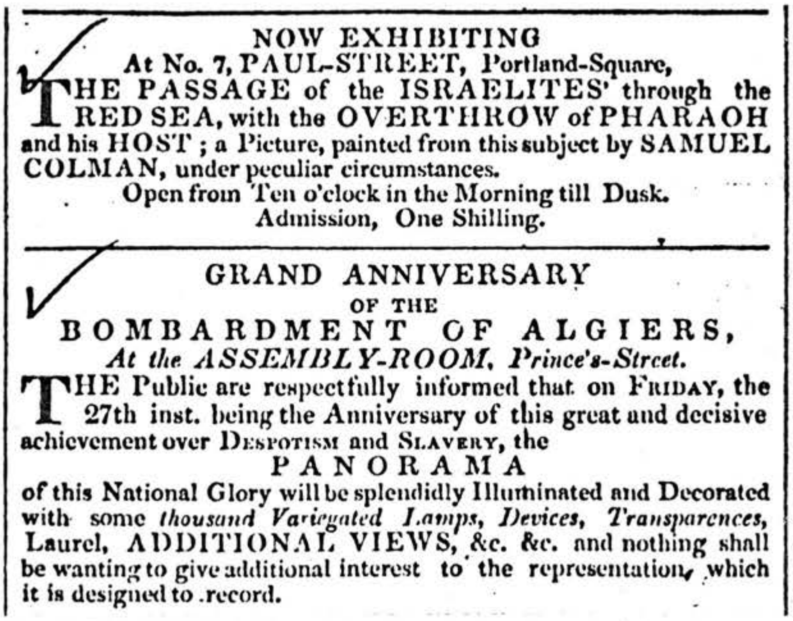
TUESDAY, August 24.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

We are *not* to have a Meeting to express our opinions and feelings on this glorious event. A few old whigs and old women have assembled in close divan, and have determined that the city of Bristol, the second city in the kingdom, shall be the last to speak its sentiments—later than the last, for it is not to be allowed to express any sentiments at all.

If the public are quiescent under this dictation, will not *our readers* feel a strong inclination to inquire as to the why and the wherefore they are to be subjected to this restraint? And are they not entitled to be satisfied as to the soundness of the reasons which

Fig. 2
The Bristol Mercury, 24 August 1830
p. 3, col. 2



NOW EXHIBITING
At No. 7, PAUL-STREET, Portland-Square,

THE PASSAGE of the ISRAELITES' through the RED SEA, with the OVERTHROW of PHARAOH and his HOST; a Picture, painted from this subject by SAMUEL COLMAN, under peculiar circumstances.
Open from Ten o'clock in the Morning till Dusk.
Admission, One Shilling.

GRAND ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
BOMBARDMENT OF ALGIERS,
At the ASSEMBLY-ROOM, Prince's-Street.

THE Public are respectfully informed that on Friday, the 27th inst. being the Anniversary of this great and decisive achievement over Despotism and Slavery, the
PANORAMA
of this National Glory will be splendidly Illuminated and Decorated with some *thousand Variegated Lamps, Devices, Transparences,* Laurel, ADDITIONAL VIEWS, &c. &c. and nothing shall be wanting to give additional interest to the representation, which it is designed to record.

Fig. 3
The Bristol Gazette, 26 August 1830
p. 2, col. 2

of a number of meanings could be attached to the word 'peculiar'. The very appearance of an advertisement, however, was 'peculiar', for Colman did not make it a habit to advertise in the newspapers. The artist's belief in the uniqueness and importance of this painting must have been 'peculiarly' firm.

The visionary paintings which include the group of large apocalyptic scenes and smaller, related pictures will be discussed in Section D. The advertisement is mentioned here, however, because it marks an event in the obscure life of Samuel Colman and because it confirms the stylistic message of the paintings. We know, because of it, that at least as early as 1830 Colman was painting in the dramatic style associated with John Martin, tackling the kind of biblical topics taken up by Francis Danby in his London period, and in the process 'projecting on to a wide screen' the kind of symbolism he evidently admired in Hogarth.

With all this in mind, one wonders what 'peculiar' purpose Colman had when, also in 1830, he sent a picture to the Duke of Wellington. One of the letters to the artist which was unearthed in 1985 is a brief message, dated 25 September 1830 which reads as follows: 'The Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to Mr Colman. The Duke has received his Letter mentioning that he has sent the Duke a Painting. The Duke is much obliged to him, but the Duke makes it a rule to decline to receive presents'. The mysterious gift may have been anything, from a large cataclysmic scene to a view of the town of Wellington; and perhaps future investigations may provide enlightenment.

The famous riots which took place in Bristol at the end of October 1831 had an obvious attraction for local artists. The apocalyptic scenes which menaced the city's inhabitants and the buildings were recorded by a number of painters, with Colman among them, as it appears from a sale catalogue of 1881, advertising the collection of pictures of 'John E. Roberts, Esq., Clifton'. Number 50, a watercolour, is described as 'A Sketch of the Custom House, Bristol, after the Riots, drawn at the time by Coleman'.[18]

By January 1833 Samuel and Mary Colman had become members of a new Independent church - Zion Chapel, Bedminster (Pls. 70, 71 and 73). The building opened for worship in June 1830, but it was not until January 1833 that those attending were officially congregated; so Colman and his wife may have had connections with Zion before 1833, although their names do not appear in the long list of seatholders who signed an invitation to the Revd J.E. Good to become pastor of Zion (September 1832).[19] The reason for the Colman's move from Castle Green is not clear, but William Thorp was ill during the winter of 1832-1833 and unlikely to return to his duties as minister, so this may have had something to do with the transfer.

A strong suggestion of Colman's early interest in Zion Chapel is provided by an oil painting which might be considered a portrait of the new church (Pl. 72). For convenience I shall refer to this painting as Sunday Morning, Going to Church - this being the title of a picture Colman exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1840. It is now in the Bristol Art Gallery but for many years it lay in storage at Zion Chapel. It is described in some detail by Henry B. Cozens in The Church of the Vow (Bristol, 1930), and Cozens claims that the picture shows Zion 'as it was in 1832'.[20] The canvas bears a tax stamp, '1832/52', confirming Cozens' statement, or at least showing that the painting could not have been begun before 1832; and Going to Church was the title of one of Colman's three pictures shown that year with the Society of Bristol Artists.

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[18] Avon County Reference Library - B 23624, Vol. 2. The sale was held by H.R. Fargus & Co., Bristol.

[19] This record is part of a collection of early Zion Chapel documents, deposited in the Bristol Record Office in November, 1983 - Ref. No. 38603. (This number can be taken as applicable to all Zion documents referred to hereafter.)

The early minute books of the chapel show that Colman and his wife were active members there between 1833 and 1835. Mrs Colman served on the committee of the Dorcas Society for that period and a 'Miss Colman' (probably one of the artist's two daughters) is listed as having been present at more than one of this society's meetings.[21] A church minute-book entry for 31 January 1833, states, 'The church met at seven p.m. Mr. Colman prayed'. This is about as close as we can come to Colman as a person - at fifty-three evidently a respected member of his congregation.

As a participant in the life of his church, Colman may not have had much time or inclination to attend the convivial gatherings of his fellow artists, who met in each other's homes or went out sketching on the banks of the Avon or in picturesque Leigh Woods. He was older than most of the other 'Bristol School' artists and may have felt separated from them by his age, and perhaps also by a lack of formal artistic training. There is no mention of him in the Gibbons or

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[20] Cozens, p. 32. The picture will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3.

[21] Page 81 of the first Minute Book shows the names of Samuel and Mary Colman in the list of those 'persons united into a Christian Church at Zion Chapel', 3 January 1833. Castle Green Meeting is given, in the Colmans' case, under the column heading, 'Whence dismissed'.

Cumberland papers which provide so much detailed information about Francis Danby and his friends in Bristol.[22] Yet, as will be seen, Colman did sketch local views similar to those which attracted Danby, Rippingille, and their companions. It is also worth emphasizing that he took part in at least three exhibitions in Bristol, the 1824 'modern' show at the Institution and the 1832 and 1834 exhibitions held by the Bristol Society of Artists.[23]

On the whole, however, the lack of documentary evidence, either for or against Colman's participation in social activities with other artists in Bristol, tends to mark him as a retiring man, well aware of his fellow painters' work, but committed to church interests.

On the other hand, church interests may have provided the modest drawing master with an entrance into the society of local politicians and literati. Zion Chapel was founded by John Hare of Firfield House. Hare (1753-1839) was the head of a large company of linen floor-cloth manufacturers and was an important man in Bristol. His brother-in-law, Joseph Cottle the publisher, was also a Zion member; and Cottle, in turn, was an amateur poet, remembered as the friend and patron of Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth. In the Rule Book of Zion Chapel Samuel Colman's signature appears directly below that of Joseph Cottle. And in the Colman sketchbook there is an inscribed view of

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[22] See Francis Greenacre, The Bristol School of Artists: Francis Danby and Painting in Bristol 1810-1840 (Bristol, 1973), p. 203. The Cumberland Papers are in the British Museum (Add. MSS 36491-522) and the Gibbons Papers are mainly in private keeping).

[23] For the catalogues of the BSA see Avon County Reference Library - B 9871 and B 9872. Colman showed three pictures in 1832, one in 1834. See Catalogue for details.

Firfield House and another drawing of an avenue in its grounds, while the same avenue is featured in a charming little watercolour (Plates 74, and 75).[24] So it is tempting to suppose that Hare or Cottle asked Colman to paint Sunday Morning, Going to Church, and that one of these men, or someone in their circle of acquaintance, commissioned his large apocalyptic scenes. A private arrangement between the artist and a patron who was also a Dissenter would explain the notable lack of publicity accorded these remarkable pictures in the nineteenth century.

In 1839 Colman exhibited again at the Royal Academy. His Flowerpiece (No. 1184) is now either lost, or confused with other studies of flowers. (See, for example, Pl. 76.) The following year he showed Sunday Morning, Going to Church (No. 224). Both in 1839 and in 1840 Colman's address, as given in the R.A. catalogues, was No. 4, Commercial Road, Pimlico, otherwise known as The Stone House.[25] This does not necessarily mean that he had already set up permanent residence in London, but since his name had disappeared from the Bristol directories, and since the house he rented in Paul Street was empty by the second half of the 1838/9 tax year, it does seem likely that he had moved his home to the metropolis.[26]

When the census was taken in June, 1841, Colman was living with his family in St Ann's Road, Brixton.[27] The area was then apparently one of mild prosperity; neighbours included a solicitor, a minister and a schoolmaster. A fairly accurate idea of the way the street was viewed by those in control of the property market can be arrived at by reading the following advertisement, from page 1 of a supplement to The Times of 6 August 1844:

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[24] The watercolour is still owned by the artist's descendants, who have presented the sketchbook to the City Art Gallery, Bristol.

[25] The 1841 Census confirms the identity of No. 4 and The Stone House.

[26] See the entries in the Rate Books (for Poor, Harbour and Paving) for the Parish of St Paul, held in the Bristol Record Office.

> Cottage, North Brixton - to be LET, a genteel cottage, situate in St. Ann's-road, North Brixton, within a few minutes' walk of the church; containing an entrance hall, drawing-room, dining-room, kitchen, wash-house, coal and wine cellars, on the ground floor; on the first floor, two best bedrooms, dressing room, and servant's sleeping room; a good garden and chaise-house. Rent and taxes under £50 per annum. Inquire of Mr. Davies, carpenter, St Ann's-road, North Brixton. The cottage will only be let to a tenant of great respectability, and for a not less term than three or five years.

When the census was taken, only Elizabeth Colman was at home with her parents in this 'genteel' neighbourhood. Her sister was, perhaps, in residence at a school. The family had an eighteen-year-old servant, Hannah Dean, apparently a native of the district. It is pleasant to be able to record that the artist's home was named Claude Cottage. Like Francis Danby, Colman was no doubt 'more convinced than ever that Mr. Claude did not get his reputation for nothing'.[28]

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[27] I consulted a microfilm copy of the census at the Minet Library, Brixton - H.O. 107/1056. According to the local archivist, St Ann's Road is now Southey Road (just off Brixton Road, near the Oval). The exact address in 1841 was almost certainly No. 10 St Ann's Road, since the entry in reference to the Colmans appears in the enumerator's book between the entries for numbers 9 and 11. Colman's age was recorded as 60, his wife's as 50, and their daughter Elizabeth's as 20, but adult ages were rounded down to the nearest five years in the 1841 census.

[28] Letter from Francis Danby to John Gibbons, 1 January 1827. Quoted by Greenacre, p. 62.

It was at Claude Cottage, in September 1841, that Samuel Colman made his will.[29] This document is disappointingly lacking in idiosyncrasies. However, it does provide valuable information, and hints about the artist's origins.

At a stage in 'Colman studies' when, apart from the little pamphlet in Bristol, only the painter's death certificate had come to light - and when the latter was of rather dubious assistance to the historian, since it merely describes Colman as a 'gentleman' - the will was a very useful find. It establishes the identity of the testator as a painter, and includes the name of his home, Claude Cottage. It also supplies his wife's maiden name, and the names of her brother, James Cayme the younger, of Yeovil, and of her sister, Elizabeth Meech of Sherborne, Dorset. The reference to Yeovil helped to explain the existence in Yeovil Museum of a portrait by Colman (signed, and dated 1839) of local solicitor, Samuel Watts, Jr. and made it appear worthwhile to do further research in Taunton, at the Somerset Record Office - research which proved fruitful, since it revealed the facts about Colman's baptism and marriage which have been set out above.

The will names just two children, both apparently under 21 years of age in 1841. These are Elizabeth Colman and Mary Calborough Colman. The document also names two executors, Colman's friends, Samuel Fox of Tottenham and James Foster, a stockbroker, of 64 Broad Street, London. Foster (1787-1861) was a member of the Society of Friends for much of his life, a point of interest in view of the fact that Colman's young son was buried in a Quaker cemetery. The stockbroking firm of Foster and Braithwaite is still in business in the City and its early ledgers, now kept in the Guildhall Library, show that Colman invested in a moderate way in North American railroad shares.[30]

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[29] Public Record Office, London - document PROB/10/6229/7664.

Samuel Fox of Tottenham (1794-1874) was also a Quaker. In fact he was a prominent member of the Society. He earned his living as a woolen manufacturer but was also a Quaker minister from 1827 onwards. He was active in a number of organizations, including the Friends' Tract Society, the Temperance Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society, and lived in Tottenham from 1837 until his retirement to Falmouth in 1866. His link with Colman is particularly interesting because he was born in Wellington, Somerset, and was in business there for many years before moving to London.

Although Colman (with its variant 'Coleman') is a common name in the Somerset parish registers, no appropriate record has come to light, except in the Wellington register, of the marriage of Samuel Colman's parents, Robert and Mary.[31] An entry in the Wellington Parish Register for 10 August 1761, shows that Robert Colman married Mary Scott on that date. Scott was a familiar name in Wellington, as was Colman. The same register shows that on 27 January 1780, a William Colman married Sarah Calborough. Since Samuel Colman's son was named William Scott and one of his daughters was called Mary Calborough, the identification of the Wellington Robert Colman and Mary Scott with the parents of the artist has at least a strong chance of being correct. If Samuel's parents were married in 1761, the William Colman who married Sarah Calborough in the year in which Samuel was born (1780) may have been the painter's brother.

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[30] Guildhall Library, London - MS 14253/2-4 and index. From at least the beginning of 1839 until early in 1846 the Colman family had shares in the Alabama Railroad. I have been able to examine papers still held by Foster and Braithwaite, but have found no mention of Colman among them. They do show, however, that Samuel Fox and his family had extensive dealings with the company. For further information about Foster see W.J. Reader, A House in the City (London, 1979).

[31] Phillimore's Parish Registers for Somerset have been carefully combed. The original Parish Register for Wellington is in the SRO - D/P/Wel 2/1/3/, C/2408.

Returning from conjecture about the early years of Samuel Colman to the facts known about the last years of his life, one finds that the painter moved house once again, this time to 20 Cottage Grove, New Peckham - just two or three miles from Claude Cottage in Brixton.

Among the lithographs by Colman which came to light in 1984 there is one (picturing a woman on a country path) which is worked over in pencil and inscribed (again in pencil): 'Drawing taught in various styles by S. Colman, 20 Cottage Grove, New Peckham'. The same lithograph, but without the inscription, appears in a book of nine prints - lithographic studies entitled 'Herbage and Trees by S. Colman'. This sort of teaching manual was in production over a wide period of time; the alteration of the lithograph to include the Cottage Grove address does not necessarily prove that the book was the product of Colman's last years, after the move to New Peckham. But it does show that he was still in business as a teacher at least as late as the end of 1841.[32]

Various drawings of London survive too, undated, but suggesting, from their appearance and in particular from their compositional similarities with various other drawings which are watermarked, that they belong to these last years. The London drawings are inscribed with titles of the sites, in some instances, and these include Hyde Park, with families feeding waterfowl on the Serpentine; a canal scene in Pimlico; sketches of boats and bridges on the Thames, and a drawing of Clapham Common which includes a cowherd, and two women hanging out clothes to dry on a line strung between two trees.

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[32] It will be remembered that Colman made his will in September 1841, at Claude Cottage, Brixton. The date of his move to New Peckham is not known.

A watercolour of The Flood also appears to be a very late example of Colman's work, since it seems to owe a number of details to Turner's powerful Shade and Darkness - The Evening of the Deluge, which was not exhibited at the Royal Academy until 1843.

It may become possible, as time goes on, to identify more drawings and to associate them with watermarked or dated pictures which will provide us with a fuller picture of Colman's activities, in London and earlier. For instance it may then be possible to say when he made sketching expeditions to picturesque places on the coast or in the mountains and whether he was in the habit of going back to Yeovil from time to time once he was established in Bristol, and even after he had moved to London.[33] For the present, it is simply in order to say with a fair degree of confidence that Colman was active, as a teacher and as a painter 'in various styles', right up to the last years of his life.

Samuel Colman died on 21 January 1845. His death certificate shows the cause of death as 'hydrothorax' after an illness lasting five weeks. The official 'informant' was a woman called Ann Parsons - a nurse, perhaps, or maybe simply a neighbour; the certificate indicates that she was present at Colman's death.[34]

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[33] The portrait of Samuel Watts, Jr., of Yeovil, is signed and dated, 1839. However it is possible that Watts visited Colman in London.

Towards the end of the same week, The Times carried a two-line notice, 'On the 21st inst., at his residence, New Peckham, Samuel Colman, Esq., aged 65'.[35] There was no further obituary. Apparently the world was not much interested in reviewing the career of this particular picture-maker. However, Colman's family or friends must have expected him to be remembered in Yeovil, as the notice of his death was inserted in the Sherborne, Dorchester and Taunton Journal on 30 January 1845.

Like his young son, Samuel Colman was laid to rest in a Quaker cemetery. The funeral took place on 28 January, at the Friends' Burial Ground, Peckham. But, in what may look like an uncanny act of cooperation with Colman's 'obscurity agent', the Ministry of Works cleared the Peckham Burial Ground in 1962, re-interring the remains in a communal grave in the Friends' section of Camberwell Old Cemetery in East Dulwich.[36] At all events the anonymity of the artist's final resting place is quite in keeping with the peculiar covering of his tracks which has denied us a clear picture of his origins and early life.

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[34] The death certificate was made out in the Registration District of Camberwell, Sub-district Peckham, on 22 January 1845. The Death Index in the Alexandra House section of the General Register Office (London) gives the reference; Jan/Mar, 1845, Camberwell, Vol 4, page 54.

[35] Friday, 24 January 1845, page 7, column 6.

[36] The interment record which is kept by the Society of Friends shows that Samuel Colman was a 'Non-member' at the time of his death. His body is now interred in grave number 3088/67 in Camberwell Old Cemetery. For the record of the burial, see the Digest of Deaths, 1837-1961, kept at Friends' House, Euston Road, London.

Because Colman's own life was apparently very private, and because it is so difficult to force out of his biography explanations of the 'peculiar circumstances' which he attached to at least one of his paintings, almost any document referring to the artist's family takes on an exaggerated importance and becomes an invitation to carry out more detective work in an attempt to come to grips with the problems of chronology and iconography which confront anyone interested in Colman's pictures.

Colman's will was proved on 3 March 1845, the executors having delegated the legal work to solicitor R.W. Jennnings of Bennett's Hill.[37] The estate was valued at £2,000 - quite a considerable sum in those days. Mrs Colman was alive when the will was proved, and, as the 'universal legatee', she would have benefitted from the sale of Colman's property for the purchase of stocks and shares. Excepted from the sale, according to the provisions of the will, would have been a number of personal articles, including furniture, plate, china, pictures and books. As we have seen, some of the pictures have been passed down from generation to generation and are still with members of the family.

Another official reference to Colman's property is made in the Legacy Duty Register. This is interesting since it introduces the name of Alfred Bullock Baghott Watts, who apparently acted as 'surety' for the payment of the duty on Samuel Colman's estate. (£155 was paid on 6 February 1849.)[38] Alfred Watts was born in Yeovil in 1821, one of many children of Samuel Watts, Jr., and of Anna Maria Watts, of Lower Kingston, Yeovil. Alfred's address, as given in the Legacy Duty document, was '1. Belgrave St, N. Pancras'. The Post Office London Directory and Webster's Court Register show 6 Belgrave Street to have been his address from 1844 until some time between 1849 and 1851, when he moved to 80 Mornington Road, Regent's Park, to a residence known as Baghott Villa. The 1851 census records A.B.B. Watts as a 'land proprietor', unmarried, sharing his home with his sister Emma, who was several years his senior. Kelly's Post Office Directory adds the information that Watts was the proprietor of baths at 32 Hatton Garden by 1853 (possibly earlier). His name is missing from the directories after 1858. It is possible that this Alfred Watts should be associated with a 'Mr Watts' who was paid £100 from the Colman account with Foster and Braithwaite, on 6 March 1845, just after the administration of her late husband's estate was granted to Mary Colman.[39]

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[37] See proxy document held by the Public Record Office - PROB 31/1462/493.

[38] Legacy Duty Register - PRO/IR 26/1700, Fol. 140/1.

Mary Colman disappears from recorded history about the beginning of 1846 (with the last of the Colman entries in the Foster and Braithwaite Ledgers). Of her daughter Mary hardly anything more is known either. However an entry in the Post Office London Suburban Directory for 1876 includes the 'Misses Colman and Meech' of Bexley Heath in a list of those offering private schooling for 'ladies'. An 1880 edition of the same directory gives, under Bexley Heath, but with no specific address, the entry, 'Colman, Mary (Miss): ladies' school'. The information that Mary was keeping a school during these years is quite compatible, as we shall see, with the career of her sister. The Meech partner in 'Misses Colman and Meech' was no doubt a cousin from Sherborne.

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[39] Guildhall Library - MS 14253/3, Fol. 81. It is possible, of course, that 'Mr Watts' was Samuel Watts, the Yeovil solicitor himself.

Elizabeth Colman was married on 21 February 1848. Her husband was Samuel Prankard, whose father, James Prankard (who died in 1838) had been an Independent minister in Somerset before serving for many years as pastor of Bethel Independent Chapel in Sheerness, Kent. The Register of Baptisms of Yeovil Independent Chapel (the same book in which the baptism of Samuel Colman is recorded) contains an entry showing that Mary, daughter of 'James Prankard and Mary his wife of Yeovil' was born in Yeovil on 20 February 1805 and baptised in Yeovil in November of that year. The child's father was minister at Somerton at this period and he and his family continued to live in Somerset until 1811. Samuel Colman may have become friendly with the Revd Prankard during these years.[40]

Elizabeth's marriage to Samuel Prankard took place at the Parish Church of St Giles, Camberwell.[41] The marriage certificate shows Samuel to have been a 'Commercial Traveller' at the time. Later he appears in the London directories and on the birth and death certificates of his children as an 'ironmonger's assistant'. When he died in June 1856, his own death certificate showed, as the cause of death, 'Delirium Tremens, 3 days'. He left behind him, in Elizabeth's care, at least four children. Samuel Colman Prankard was born in December 1848. He died, aged only eight, in 1856, on the 20th of December, almost exactly six months after his father's death. The illness this time was said to have been 'Pertussis Catarrhic Pneumonia'. The boy's sister, Mary Agnes, died at the same time.[42]

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[40] James Prankard's career is reasonably well documented. For a published account of his work in Sheerness see Alfred T. Sears, James Prankard . . . with extracts from his Church Book (Sheerness, 1962).

[41] The Register is kept by the Greater London Record Office. The marriage was, of course, also registered publicly, and a copy of the entry may be obtained from the General Register Office (St Catherine's House).

There were two children left alive. These were Elizabeth Edith Bagge Prankard, who was born in Rotherhithe in June 1852, and Emily Cayme Prankard, born in June 1853, while the family was living at 2, Edward Street, Newington - also in south London. After the death of her husband, Elizabeth Prankard moved into lodgings in Kentish Town.[43]

One may suppose that the childhood years of Elizabeth Edith Prankard and of her sister Emily could not have been other than 'disadvantaged'. However, among the pictures by their grandfather which have recently emerged from obscurity there are some drawings by both Elizabeth and Emily, and others (of some quality) by their mother, as well as watercolours by Edith.[44]

In 1872 the family fortunes took an adventurous turn when Elizabeth Edith (known simply as Edith) went out to China to marry her second cousin, Samuel Meech, who was working for the London Missionary Society in Peking. In 1874 Emily also sailed for China, to be married to Revd Meech's old college friend and colleague, James Gilmour.

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[42] It is possible that this Mary Agnes is to be identified with a Mary Alice Prankard, born in June 1852, in Newington. There are many minor errors in the indices. (A copy of the birth certificate has not been sent for in this case. Its index reference in St Catherine's House is: June, 1852, Newington, 1d 168.)

[43] Her son's death certificate indicates that the lodgings were at 11 Hollis Place. Mrs Prankard was not there by the time the census was taken in 1861.

[44] I have not seen the watercolours. Some of the drawings are initialled 'E.E.B.P.', others 'E.C.P.'. Some are signed or initialled by Elizabeth Colman, and still others are marked simply 'E.P.' - which could mean either Elizabeth Edith or her mother, though the style suggests that they are by Elizabeth Edith.

Gilmour's courtship of Miss Prankard had been entirely in the form of letters. And while the exigencies of the situation (Gilmour's great distance from Britain, his wish for a wife, and the need at the mission station for a woman to help teach Chinese girls) imply a practical move by Emily, the modern reader may be forgiven for sensing in her a Romantic energy and an evangelistic enthusiasm in keeping with the spiritual legacy of a painter-preacher.

Sadly, most of the original letters exchanged at the time Emily was being invited to go to China have disappeared. However, extracts were printed in Gilmour's biography, and some manuscript letters do survive in the archives of the London Missionary Society (now the Council for World Mission.)[45] From these we learn that in 1874 Emily Prankard and her mother were both teaching in London and that there was some question as to whether Emily could be spared by her mother from the duties of the school. A letter[46] from Gilmour which was addressed to his superiors at the L.M.S. on 25 January 1876, sheds some light on the situation:

> When Mrs Gilmour left England she completed an arrangement about a school which it was hoped, would furnish Mrs Prankard with means of subsistence and a home. For a time this did very well but now, partly

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[45] The relevant papers are kept in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of London University - Council for World Mission: Archives - China, G (2) North China, 1860-1898, Boxes 2-6.

[46] See Box 2, Folder 6, Jacket B of the material cited in Note 45. A Bexley Heath address is given for Mrs Prankard.

> from Mrs Prankard's not being able to do so much in the school as she had hoped to do, and also partly from an unfortunate misunderstanding perhaps arising from Mrs Prankard's not being a very good hand at business the school has slipped through her hands and she is now without a home, living alone in London with strangers . . . . Mrs Gilmour left Mrs Prankard joint owner of the school with her . . . sister Miss Coleman . . . Now that Mrs P. is left a lone widow in London we cannot longer avoid asking her to re-join her children.

His employers found that they could not contribute to the cost of Mrs Prankard's voyage to China, and Gilmour paid for the passage himself. He and Emily travelled to Tientsin in the late autumn to meet Mrs Prankard and bring her to Peking. So it is very likely that the woman who, as 'Miss Coleman', attended meetings involving the 'home missionary' activities of Zion Chapel, in Bristol, in 1835, found herself in Peking, forty years later - probably engaged in very similar work. On her arrival, there would have been a new granddaughter to admire (born to Edith on 3 October); and during her stay in Peking her other daughter, Emily Gilmour, had a son, born on 27 April 1877. But, though James Gilmour's letters show clearly that he believed his mother-in-law would stay with her daughters for '8 or 10 years', Mrs Prankard set out for England on 9 August 1877.

Though she was 'not very robust' according to her husband, Emily survived for eleven years in China. James was an ambitious evangelist to the people of Mongolia, and she was able to go with him several times on his gruelling expeditions across the plains, travelling in ox carts which had 'straw mat awnings' above them for protection from the sunlight. In Mongolia Emily 'made good progress in the language', according to one of James's letters to headquarters. In Peking she took charge for a time over the girls' boarding school, besides giving medical aid and playing the harmonium for sevices, and beginning the education of her sons. Her death took place in Peking in 1885, when she finally gave in to tuberculosis. Of her three little boys, the youngest died in China while still an infant. The others were sent home to Hamilton, Lanarkshire, in 1886 by their father. James himself did not survive his wife for many years. He died in Tientsin, after a brief illness, in May 1891. His sons did not marry, so there are no direct descendants of James and Emily, though members of collateral branches of the Gilmour family still live in Cathkin, where Gilmour of Mongolia spent his teenage years, and some of them have pictures and other mementos from China to remind them of the great missionary, and clear memories of James's sons.[47]

Edith Prankard's husband, Samuel Evans Meech, was not such a dynamic personality as James Gilmour. Where Gilmour was, by the evidence of his correspondence, something of a controversialist, and a restless man, hungry for signs of success in his ministry, Samuel Meech was a quieter person, an organizer and a diplomat, a pastor rather than an evangelist. His period of service in China lasted for 61 years, including eleven years of voluntary work following his official retirement. He died at the home of one of his daughters, in Wiltshire, on 6 January 1937. His wife had died in Peking in 1903.[48]

Though there are descendants of Samuel and Edith Meech who bear their name, it has fallen to the lot of the children and grandchildren of the daughters of these missionaries to represent the 'line' of Samuel Colman in Britain, and to be the custodians of his paintings and drawings. In fact, the pictures which have been kept together as a collection until recently have been passed down from one generation of women to another.[49] In other words, those pictures by her father which were eventually inherited by Elizabeth Prankard must then have become the property of her daughters, Elizabeth Edith and Emily - unless, of course, Mrs Prankard lived on until after 1903, which seems very unlikely, considering the absolute lack of information about her among her descendants. No pictures by Colman appear to have been handed down in the Gilmour family, but this is hardly surprising. Since Emily died young, and abroad, and since Edith also died in China after spending more than thirty years as a missionary wife and teacher, few of the works of art produced by their grandfather, or of the drawings and paintings which were carried out by them and their mother are likely to have ever been in their keeping. Instead, they would have been looked after for Edith and Emily by their sister-in-law, Mary Meech, who lived in Enfield and whose home was a base for Revd Meech and members of his family when they were in England. According to one of her great-nieces, 'When Aunt Mary died, several of her things came to my mother . . . Among them was a big tallboy whose bottom drawer was full of the paintings, drawings and prints which are now proving of such interest'.[50]

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[47] Gilmour published several books on his work in China. Details of these and of his biography are given in the Bibliography. There is a short obituary of Emily Gilmour on pages 370/1 of the Chronicle of the L.M.S., 1885. (The Chronicle is often bound with the Evangelical Magazine.)

[48] There is an obituary of Revd Meech in The Times of Thursday, 7 January 1837, p. 14, col. 3. It is from this obituary that the information about the year of Edith Meech's death has come.

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[49] See Appendix One for genealogical chart. (To protect their privacy, the names of the present generation and of the last one have not been given.)

[50] Private letter to Margaret Whidden, 3 September 1984.

In this way a pedigree has now been established for many interesting paintings and a bridge made between an obscure artist who died before the middle of the nineteenth century and living kinfolk of the present day. Yet there is nothing in this story to explain the 'peculiar' mission of Samuel Colman; and for an understanding of the painter as prophet one must turn again to Bristol and to the pictures themselves.

CHAPTER TWO

The Bristol School

In a period when English art was dominated by the innovative genius of Turner and Constable and marked, too, by the dramatic imagination of John Martin, Bristol was not without her own Romantic landscapists. Their coherence as a 'school' will be described briefly in this chapter; and this will make it possible to judge Colman's place as an artist within his Bristol context and, later, within the wider frame of reference of Romantic painting in Britain.[1]

As a centre of literary and scientific experiment and of philosophic radicalism Bristol was a lively place during the Napoleonic wars; and the memory of its associations with Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth, with Thomas de Quincey and Dr Thomas Beddoes continued to influence the modes of thinking of the friends of these men years after they had departed from the place. But in the encouragement of the visual arts the city made a somewhat belated start.

There were owners of 'old masters' among the well-to-do living near Bristol; and in the early years of Colman's residence in the city those artists and members of the public who could make the necessary arrangements might find enjoyment and instruction in touring the col-

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1 No lengthy discussion is necessary since the subject is covered comprehenisvely and perceptively by Francis Greenacre in the catalogue cited above. I have relied on it for much of the information in this chapter. I have also made use of material in the book by Eric Adams, Francis Danby: Varieties of Poetic Landscape (New Haven and London, 1973). However, I have also made use at first hand of Bristol newspapers of the 1820 s and 1830 s and of exhibition catalogues of the period.

lections of paintings and other works of art in the homes of J.S. Harford, the banker (Blaise Castle), Lord de Clifford at King's Weston, and P.J. Miles at Leigh Court near Bristol. They might venture further afield to the collection at Corsham Court in Wiltshire (home of the Methuens), and perhaps even have an opportunity of looking at the treasures owned by William Beckford at Fonthill (and later in Bath). Guides to great collections such as these could often be purchased. There was, for example, an illustrated catalogue of the Miles collection, by John Young, which was published in 1822.

Prints of famous paintings were usually available at bookshops and elsewhere in Bristol. Alfred Hill of Clare Street, for instance, was a print seller and picture restorer, established in 1808, who advertised regularly in Chilcott's Descriptive History of Bristol - a book which was frequently reprinted in Colman's lifetime. In 1830, according to an advertisement in the Bristol Journal of 24 April, Cranefeldt's Fancy Stationery Repository was selling mezzotints. And it was also possible to buy prints from London publishers, who advertised in the provincial newspapers. W. Cole, of Newgate Street, London, was advertising 'superior lithographs' in the Bristol Mercury of 31 October 1825 - including A Seaport by Claude Lorrain.

Sometimes original paintings by famous 'old masters' could be seen in Bristol. The Mercury of 23 June 1821, published a letter from 'Old Nick the Younger' which suggested a number of pictures suitable for inclusion in an exhibition which was evidently being planned by the 'proprietors of the new Philosophical Rooms'. 'Mr. Miles's picture of The Sacrifice, by Claude' came near the top of his list, and he also noted that 'Mr. Acraman has some Salvators, an exquisite little bijou of Carlo

Dolci and some other things equally fine'. The letter-writer added his hope that, after the exhibition had been enjoyed by the public, artists would be able to study the pictures 'for a month or two', or that free admission to artists during the public exhibition might be arranged.

Sales by auction also provided artists, connoisseurs and the public with the opportunity to see fine pictures. 'Mr. Fargus's auction-room, Clare Street' was the scene of many such shows. Felix Farley's Bristol Journal (25 May 1822) announced a large sale, to take place on 4 June. And the January 27 edition of the Bristol Mercury for 1823 printed an advertisement for an auction, to include a collection of paintings owned by 'Mr. Francis Harris' who was going abroad.

It was also possible to see modern art, usually (in the early years of the century at least) in the studios of the artists themselves. Sometimes there were quite formal one-man exhibitions, such as Washington Allston's (unsuccessful) display of his work at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in Bristol in 1814. E.V. Rippingille showed a number of his paintings to the public in Bristol in September 1828, prior to taking them to Gloucester for use as illustrations to his lectures at the Literary Institution.[2]

Retrospectives were rare in the early nineteenth century, and the 'Edward Bird Memorial Exhibition' (1820), given by his friends in Bristol for the benefit of the Bird family, was no doubt inspired by the Reynolds exhibition, held by the British Institution in London in 1813.[3]

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[2] Bristol Mercury, 23 September 1828, p. 3, col. 5.

[3] See Trevor Fawcett, The Rise of English Provincial Art: Artists, Patrons and Institutions outside London, 1800-1830 (Oxford, 1974), p. 67.

Also of considerable interest to local collectors, and to topographical artists, would have been the exhibition held at 41 Prince's Street, Bristol, in late August 1824. This was a display of drawings by Hugh O'Neill (1784-1824). O'Neill was London-born, and the exhibition's announcement, in the Bristol Mercury of 23 August, stated that the drawings which were not sold in Bristol would go on to London. The advertisement included the information that 'the several negotiations for disposal collectively, of the late Mr. Hugh O'Neill's drawings and sketches having been broken off, they may now be purchased by Private Contract, either singly, or in the several Series (with regard to those in Bristol), dictated by their connexion of Street or Parish'.

More usually the newspapers of the 1820s announced the exhibition of single paintings by artists, local or otherwise. Haydon's Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem visited the Assembly Rooms, Bristol, during the summer of 1822. And John Martin's Belshazzar's Feast was on exhibition at the Gallery of Arts, St Augustine's Parade, in the spring of 1825. There, according to the 'Oracle of Fashion' of the Bristol Mercury, (15 May) the picture had 'already been visited by more than 1,500 persons since the commencement of its exhibition here'.[4] The same 'Oracle of Fashion' noted that 'Mr. Rippingille's picture' was on view at the Literary Institution in Park Street, as of 18 August 1823. (This may have been The Recruiting Party, shown at the Royal Academy in the previous year.)

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[4] For Haydon's painting, see FFBJ, 8 June 1822, p.3, col. 4, and 15 June 1822, p. 3, col. 1. The Mercury of 8 June (p. 3, cols. 3 and 4) gives it a very bad review. For Martin, see the Mercury, 16 May 1825, p. 3, col. 5.

Samuel Colman exhibited St John Preaching in the Wilderness in Bristol, in the late summer of 1821. As already mentioned, the picture was very poorly received - at least by 'Philographicus' in the columns of the Mercury.[5] However, the reviewer does inform us that 'Mr. Colman has, from time to time, exhibited pictures, and modestly enough left them to recommend themselves by their own particular merits; but the present one comes before us with all the "pomp and circumstance" of a work of great study and labour'. Certainly Colman was an acknowledged artist, if not a fully appreciated poetic landscapist, by 1821.

Public institutions for the display of works of art by both past and living artists did not exist in England, apart from those in London, until after 1800. Then, urged on by the growing interest in the fine arts which came with the quickening pace of life as towns grew, roads and transport improved, travel overseas became feasible for more and more people, and as publications increased in number, societies of fine art were established in various provincial towns. Norwich had such a society by 1803, Bath by 1808, Leeds by 1809 and Liverpool by 1817. The 'Bristol Institution for the promotion of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts' was founded on 29 February 1820. However, its first full exhibition of pictures - 'old masters' - did not take place until June 1824. Meantime the privately owned Gallery of Arts on St Augustine's Quay was opened in 1823 with a show that included about forty paintings by artists locally resident. An announcement in the Bristol Mercury claimed that the new gallery was 'instituted at the express desire and under the especial patronage of the Fashionable Circles of Bristol'.[6] There were five exhibition rooms. Rippingille, Pyne and William West were among the contemporary artists who showed their work, according to a newspaper report of 29 December. Samuel Colman's name was not mentioned. However, as we have seen, he did take part in the 'modern art' exhibition at the Bristol Institution the following year.[7]

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[5] Saturday, 25 August 1821, p. 3, col. 4.

'It was an age of societies', writes Trevor Fawcett, 'societies to inform, reform, propagate, restrict, convert, establish, oppose, encourage, and improve: and as they proliferated, they branched through the provinces. In some sense the formation of art institutions must have been a cultural manifestation of the broad evangelical movement'.[8] Certainly Colman's *St James's Fair* is an appropriate picture for any 'broadly evangelical' art institution.

In spite of the encouraging formation of the Institution, Bristol artists and their friends did not feel that the city was adequately supporting the fine arts by buying the work of living artists. 'It was our intention', runs an item in the *Bristol Mercury* in February 1825, 'to have made some remarks on the exhibition of modern pictures which has just closed, but we may spare them as a matter which would excite but little

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[6] 17 November 1823, p. 3, col, 1. The December 29 reference is to the *Bristol Mercury*, p. 3, col. 4.

[7] Both the *Bristol Mirror* of 4 December 1824, and *FFBJ* of the same date (in the latter case, p. 3, col. 2) list Samuel Colman among the exhibitors.

[8] Fawcett, p. 9.

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interest; we understand not one of the pictures was sold!'[9] This, the writer adds, 'will appear to some a reflection on their merits, but to others a comment on the boasted liberality, the improved patronage, and the growing taste of the citizens of Bristol. We leave it with our readers to decide'.

There were patrons in Bristol - consistently generous patrons, but it is true that there were only a few of them.

George Weare Braikenridge retired in 1820 from his West India business interests. He was still only forty-six, and he began what amounted to a new career as an antiquarian - devoting most of the rest of his life to collecting Gothic furnishings for his home in Brislington and employing 39 artists to make topographical drawings of Bristol, Gloucestershire and Somerset. One result of his patronage is an unrivalled collection of more than 1500 fine drawings of the Bristol area - now in the City Art Gallery. These were carried out mainly during the 1820s, with much of the work being done in the early years by O'Neill (until his death in 1824) and then by T.L.S. Rowbotham.[10] Braikenridge was clearly determined to provide future generations with a record of the appearance of Brislington; in 1980 the City Art Gallery was able to acquire a set of over one hundred views of the village and its surroundings as the antiquarian would have known them when the parish was a fashionable rural retreat rather than a mere suburban section of the city. Apart from these drawings, Braikenridge bought paintings by Danby and Jackson. However, the drawings stand as his most interesting memorial. Their consistently high quality, even when they are the work of artists of relatively minor talents, suggests a discrimination on the part of this patron which may have helped to raise the standard of topographical and other drawing among Bristol artists generally. Among the surviving drawings by Samuel Colman - in his sketchbook, in particular - there are views which combine high quality and naturalism in keeping with the kind of sketches and finished drawings which Braikenridge was paying other Bristol artists to do in the 1820s. There is no record of Colman's having been employed by Braikenridge, but the sketches of Firfield and other large houses hint at commissions for Colman by other patrons.

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[9] 28 February, p. 3, col. 3. Two days earlier a writer in FFBJ (almost certainly the Revd John Eagles) made a similar complaint about the lack of that 'spirit of liberality which is so necessary to the support and maturing of genius'.

[10] See Greenacre, p. 186. For a comprehensive study of Braikenridge, see Sheena Stoddard, 'George Weare Braikenridge (1775-1856): a Bristol antiquarian and his collections' (unpublished M. Litt. dissertation, University of Bristol, 1984). Many of the Brislington drawings are reproduced and identified in Mrs Stoddard's booklet, Mr Braikenridge's Brislington (Bristol, 1981).

There is the possibility that one such patron was William Tyson (ca 1784-1851). A lawyer's clerk turned bookseller, Tyson eventually became the editor of the Bristol Mirror. He shared with his friend George Braikenridge an interest in Bristol antiquities and like Braikenridge he was a collector, though on a smaller scale.[11] In 1852 Messrs Fargus of Bristol held a sale of Tyson's collection and the catalogue includes a number of local drawings. Unfortunately these are not individually attributed, but are merely stated (above the descriptive list) to be 'by Cashin, Rowbotham, Coleman, and others'.[12] Taking into account the frequent carelessness which affected the spelling of Colman's name, it is likely that Tyson owned drawings by Samuel Colman. And it is possible that some of the listed views (mainly of notable buildings in Bristol) were actually commissioned from Colman.

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[11] Stoddard, 'George Weare Braikenridge', p. 143.

[12] Fargus and Son, Sale of Rare and Valuable Collection of Books, and Articles of Vertu, of the late Mr. William Tyson, F.S.A. (Bristol, January 1852), p. 24. There are copies of the catalogue in the Avon County Reference Library - B 23144 and B 10925.

John Gibbons was a very different kind of patron from Braikenridge and Tyson. He was a well-to-do ironmaster and was interested in fine art rather than antiquities. His devotion to painting extended to attendance at some of the meetings of the sketching parties held by the artists and he formed an avant garde collection of English art, beginning with modern work by his friends in Bristol. He is thought to have moved away from Bristol by about 1822, but he went on buying Bristol pictures, giving unstinting support to Francis Danby and to E.V. Rippingille especially during the 1820s when their work was being introduced to Bristol and London. Gibbons bought genre pictures, and also landscapes, including poetic landscapes such as Danby's An Enchanted Island (1824/25) and its companion, The Embarkation of Cleopatra (1827). These paintings were well received in London and enormously popular in Bristol, where An Enchanted Island was even included in the 1825 exhibition at the Institution, in spite of the fact that the rest of the exhibits were Old Masters. There seems to be no doubt that Danby's success as a poetic landscapist encouraged the development of imaginative landscape production by other Bristol artists. An Enchanted Island has recognizable kinship with paintings by Samuel Jackson, James Johnson, William West, J.B. Pyne and P.F. Poole;[13] and it will become clear later that there is a relationship between some of these landscapes and Samuel

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[13] See also Greenacre, pp. 21 and 86.

Colman's Coming of the Messiah. Since Gibbons's financial encouragement was vital to Danby, at least some of the credit for the growth of the 'poetic' qualities of the Bristol School is due to this loyal patron.

The iron founder, D.W. Acraman, was a patron of the arts in Bristol as early as 1814, when Coleridge remarked that he was 'the father of the Fine Arts in this city'.[14] He owned a collection of Dutch and Flemish works of art - mainly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but he also gave support to Rippingille and bought paintings by Johnson, Danby and Muller, as well as Poole.

Samuel Colman's membership of the chapel founded by John Hare makes it particularly interesting to examine the art collecting habits of members of the Hare family. According to a published List of the Members of the Bristol Institution for the Advancement of Science, Literature and the Arts, printed in Bristol in February 1833, John Hare and a number of members of his family were members of the Institution; his eldest son, Charles is named, as is John Hare, Jr.[15] The younger John Hare served on the Committee for the Fine Arts in 1824 and 1825, according to the catalogues of the Institution's exhibitions for those years. These catalogues also indicate that John Hare, Jr, his brother Charles, and their father all lent 'old masters' to the Institution's exhibitions. To the 1824 exhibition, John Hare, Sr lent Interior of a Church at Antwerp, by P. Neefs. To the same exhibition Charles Hare lent a

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14 FFBJ, 13 August 1814, quoted by Greenacre, p. 32, note 49.

15 The Avon County Reference Library has a copy of the list - B9719. The early catalogues of the exhibitions at the Institution can also be consulted there - B9725 - B9728, and B9732 (1824-1827, and 1829).

Virgin and Child and St John, said to be by Andrea del Sarto, and Tobit and the Angel by Carlo Dolci, along with several Dutch paintings, while two years later John Jr lent a Samson and Delilah by Veronese.

Both Charles and John Hare also bought modern pictures. Charles (1784-1840), who was an alderman in Bristol, besides taking part in the running of the family firm, was the owner of de Loutherbourg's famous sea-piece, Lieut. Keith Maxwell Cutting out La Chevrette, from Basque Roads (R.A., 1802). Now in the City Art Gallery, Bristol, this picture was bought by Hare in 1824 and shown at the Gallery of Arts that summer. In 1826 it formed part of the exhibition at the Institution. Like Gibbons, Charles Hare was interested in the work of Rippingille and Danby and was at one stage a prospective purchaser for Danby's Upas Tree. The picture was with Hare in late March, 1826, though it had not been bought by the time Danby wrote to Gibbons on 29 May.[16] Hare did buy another early Danby - Landscape with Warriors of Old Times (1823).[17] And the Institution's catalogue of 1826 indicates that he was the owner of Rippingille's The Stage Coach Breakfast (an oil study for the finished painting bought by John Gibbons).[18] There was another Rippingille from Charles Hare's collection in the same exhibition, and he lent to the 1829 show Samuel and Eli, which was by the Bristol painter, John King.

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[16] Letters from Danby to John Gibbons, 29 March 1826, and 29 May 1826. (Gibbons Papers, Private Collection, Worcestershire. References supplied by Francis Greenacre).

[17] See Adams, p. 193 (Catalogue No. 158).

[18] Greenacre, pp. 135-6.

John Hare, Jr owned a Landscape by de Loutherbourg which he lent to the Institution in 1826, along with a George Morland, Fishermen on the Sea Beach, and one painting by a Bristol artist: Raising the Widow's Son, by Edward Bird. He also seems to have owned de Loutherbourg's Vision of the White Horse, which is now in the Tate Gallery.[19]

There is nothing in the catalogues to suggest that the Hares would have been inclined towards the individual, naive style of Samuel Colman's subject pictures. Equally, the wide-ranging tastes of these collectors, and their obvious attraction to dramatic themes, biblical and otherwise, would not have precluded an interest in Colman's major paintings; and indeed his subject pictures may have been especially attractive to John Hare, in view of his political interests. Of these interests there will be more to say later.

For the present we return to the 'Bristol School', remembering that artists and their friends were self-conscious about the progress of contemporary art in the city and critical about the apparent reluctance of potential buyers to support local talent. But, of what exactly did that local talent consist?

Francis Danby's is the name most readily associated nowadays with painting in Bristol in the Romantic period. However, there were artists, both professional and amateur, working in friendly association in

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19 According to the Tate records, the painting was once owned by Sholto Vere Hare, nephew of John Hare, Jr; so No. 78 in the 1826 catalogue of the Bristol Institution: '"Death on the Pale Horse" by P.J. de Loutherbourg, R.A.' is probably to be identified with this illustration of the white horse and his rider described in Revelation 6: 2. (The error in the title is perhaps not surprising; Thomas Macklin, when publishing the engraving of the painting in 1800, in his edition of the Bible, wrongly associated this horseman with Revelation 19, verses 11 and 12.

Bristol before Danby made his appearance there in 1813. Among the amateurs, the most important were George Cumberland, Dr John King and the Revd John Eagles.

George Cumberland (1754-1848) was a retired insurance agent, whose interests extended to literature and to a study of Greek and Italian art. He wrote poetry and art history, and became the friend of a number of notable artists, among them Blake, Stothard, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Paul Sandby and Richard Cosway. In Bristol, where he lived from 1808 onwards, he was valued for his knowledge of art and literature and for his willingness to introduce ambitious young artists to influential London friends like Lawrence.

John Eagles (1783-1855) was curate of St Nicholas Church, Bristol, from 1812 until 1822. He was the son of a Bristol antiquary and grew up with a familiarity with literature and with landscape painting - interests which he fused consciously in his essays and in his own watercolours and drawings, striving to recall 'visions of Fairy Land'.[20] After he left Bristol (to take up the post of curate at Halberton, Devon) he made frequent return visits, and contributed to Felix Farley's Bristol Journal under the pseudonym of Themaninthemoon. The phrase 'The Bristol School' was first applied to its artists by John Eagles.[21]

The surgeon John King presents a total contrast to the Revd Eagles. Whereas Eagles was a native of Bristol, an Oxford graduate, a conservative in politics and a man of the Establishment in every detail,

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[20] Greenacre, pp. 18 and 32, note 23 (referring to Eagles' essay in The Sketcher, 1856).

[21] Rhymes Latin and English by Themaninthemoon (Felix Farley, Bristol, 1826).

Dr King was an immigrant from Berne, who had changed his name from Johann Koenig. He was a liberal and a sceptic or agnostic in his attitude to Christianity. The friend of Coleridge and of de Quincy and Southey, he was an amateur poet, and before he arrived in Bristol he had been attempting to make his living in London as an engraver and painter. King and Eagles formed a friendship based on their common interest in art, and as King's hospitality towards artists was well known, there gathered around him, not only fellow amateurs like Cumberland and Eagles, but also young artists who were attempting to live by their skill.[22]

Edward Bird (1772-1819) was one of these friends, and King claimed, in a memoir[23] of 1839, that Bird was the focal point of the group of artists which Eagles had termed 'The Bristol School':

> About 40 years ago the late Edward Bird was the only artist of talent in this city. It was here that his genius developed with rapid strides; his society soon became the centre of attraction to all those who had enough of good taste . . . Thus was spontaneously framed a small society of art-loving friends, from which all that Bristol now can boast of artists and amateurs has descended. One of his earliest friends and pupils was the Reverend John Eagles. . . The advantage of possessing such a friend was well enjoyed by Bird, who became, alternatively, both his master and his pupil . . . Several other accomplished amateurs united with these in their social intercourse, and instituted periodical meetings at each members houses, in rotation, for the purpose of sketching and conversation; these were occasionally diversified by excursions for sketching from nature in the country. . . Several professed artists, two among them who are now flourishing abroad, found much pleasure and advantage by contributing their share to the enjoyment of this private academy.

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[22] George Cumberland, Sr, undated letter to his son George, Jr, British Museum - Ms 36512, fol. 300.

[23] John King, bound volume of newspaper reviews of exhibitions of the Bristol Society of Artists, City Art Gallery, Bristol - Mb 3742. I have quoted a passage given in Greenacre, pp. 10 and 11. The reference to the Gibbons Papers on this page is also taken from Greenacre.

> These are E.V. Rippingille and Francis Danby, both derived from its meetings a wider and more rapid expansion of their powers. The latter . . . shortly relinquished a tame style and homely scenes for daring and successful flights into the regions of imagination and poetry. . . He may be properly called the father of the present school of Bristolian landscape painters.

These reminiscences are supported by letters from King to John Gibbons, written during the 1820s. In August 1824, for example, King told Gibbons, 'We had a most animated drawing party at Fisher's last night. Gold, Branwhite and Johnson with myself came away at the sober hour of one, and left Rippingille, Jackson and West in full possession of the punch bowl with our host'.

The Bristol sketching club was probably inspired by and modelled on The Sketching Society instituted in London in 1799. Like their counterparts in London, the Bristol artists devoted most of their evening meetings to the production of imaginative monochrome drawings. The daytime sketching trips took the friends to Nightingale Valley, to Leigh Woods and to Stapleton, where they not only drew and discussed the landscape, but read and played music and picnicked on raspberry pie.[24]

Edward Bird was born in Wolverhampton but had moved to Bristol by 1797. He was made a member of the Royal Academy in 1815. His rise to fame (and to the patronage of Sir George Beaumont and of the Prince Regent) came as a heady draught for his friends back in Bristol. Eric Adams writes, 'Cumberland and Eagles were very proud of Bird, whom they materially helped on his way, and whose success gave a fillip to the hitherto feeble artistic life of Bristol and made a local school of artists a genuine possibility. His death left a gap that was immediately filled by Rippingille and Danby, the one supplying the place of the genre-painter, the other that of the history painter'.[25] Bird was often compared with his contemporary, David Wilkie, as a genre-painter. However, as Francis Greenacre points out, Bird remained independent of the fashionable models, such as Teniers and Ostade, among the Dutch painters of genre, retaining his own method of colouring. 'For ten years after Bird's death, colour, in Bristol paintings, sometimes bad but often fresh and solid, avoided such stifling stylistic blankets.'[26]

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[24] Letter from Rippingille to Cumberland, British Museum - Ms 36516, Vol. XXVI, f. 235.

Francis Danby (1793-1861) was an ambitious Irishman who arrived in Bristol quite penniless, joined its society for a number of years, and left in 1824 to seek his fortune in London. In the competitive climate of the capital he found recognition when Sir Thomas Lawrence, PRA, bought his Sunset at Sea after a Storm, shown at the Academy in 1824. Soon afterwards the Marquis of Stafford paid Danby £500 for The Delivery of Israel - which is one painting by Danby which appears to acknowledge his association with Bird, not only because it is a major 'history picture' but because its colouring is in a high key, and its figures firmly drawn. Danby's subsequent preference for darker, more mysterious colouring, and for landscapes of poetic fantasy, was perhaps, at least in part, the result of his friendship with John Eagles.

In spite of London successes, Danby continued to require the assistance of old friends, particularly John Gibbons. And he returned to Bristol, to revisit friends and favourite haunts, such as Leigh woods. The sketching society appears to have continued in spite of the absence of such important members as Danby and Eagles, and in 1829 Danby was able to attend a drawing party.[27] A more formal drawing group, continuing the poetic tradition established by Eagles and his friends, appears to have been active in Bristol in the 1830s.

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[25] Adams, pp. 11 and 12.

[26] Greenacre, p. 106.

It is interesting that associates of his years of residence in Bristol continued to seek out Danby - even when he had gone to Switzerland.[28] Danby's work was shown in Bristol from time to time after he had moved away, and his progress as an artist would have been open to observation by his friends and acquaintances while he had a studio in London, or when he showed work at the public exhibitions held there annually.

About five years younger than Danby, Edward Villiers Rippingille was also an incomer to Bristol.[29] He seems to have arrived in the city by 1817 and to have made his way into the circle of artists which included Bird. But, even by this early stage in his life, the farmer's son from Norfolk had already shown pictures twice at the Royal Academy. In 1819 his painting, The Post Office, received very favourable attention at the R.A., and for the next five years or so Rippingille was quite successful in claiming the inheritance of Edward Bird as a genre painter. In Bristol, with an opportunism which was distasteful to many of his acquaintances, he showed at the newly opened Institution the very first picture to be exhibited there. He took a hand in the organization of the Institution's exhibition of Old Masters, in 1824, and in the preparations for the first exhibition of the work of local artists. He also took on the more academic task of giving a series of lectures on art. Like his friend Danby, Rippingille became very dependent on the generosity of John Gibbons - especially once he had begun elaborate pictures which no one else would buy. His friends complained that he was indolent, uncouth and extravagant, but also attested to his skill as a painter and to his very real sympathy with the details of English landscape and rural life. Since Francis Danby and the Northamptonshire country poet, John Clare, were among these friends, this judgement is likely to have been accurate. Certainly Rippingille's early Bristol pictures - such as The Recruiting Party (1822) and The Stage Coach Breakfast, painted two years later, demonstrate that this artist was an able portraitist with an eye to preserving in visual terms the memory of Bristol's connections with the Lake poets, and a genre painter with a definite aptitude for social criticism. His self-assertion was probably a very good thing for his fellow artists in Bristol; it helped to push the necessary wedge into the doors of the newspaper offices and the Institution - admitting not only Rippingille and other artists whose work would have gained wide-spread recognition in any case, but also a number of people of quieter talents.

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[27] Greenacre, pp. 14, 17 and 18. See also Greenacre, pp. 14 and 161 (Cat. No. 179) for references to the later years of the sketching club and to an album of drawings associated with it.

[28] King visited Danby in Switzerland, according to a letter from Danby to John Gibbons, 17 October 1834 (Greenacre, pp. 14 and 32n). See also Adams, p. 50 (Danby in London).

[29] See Greenacre, pp. 121 - 127 for an account of Rippingille's career.

Among these other Bristol artists there were Samuel Jackson (1794-1869), a talented landscapist who made occasional excursions into the realms of the poetic and the exotic, and James Johnson (1803-34), a friend and pupil of Danby who followed him to London in 1825. N.C.

Branwhite (1775-1857) was a successful portrait painter, specializing in miniatures. Rolinda Sharples (1793-1838) was also a portraitist by profession, following in the footsteps of her father. Her genre pictures were influenced to a very large extent by those of Bird and she had some 'popular' success with them at the Royal Academy. However, although she was friendly with the Cumberlands and Kings at a social level, she was rather looked down upon as an artist by the men of the 'Bristol School'.[30]

William West (1801-61) was a member of the sketching group. He was an imaginative painter of some stature, but also a devotee of science. He built Bristol's camera obscura in 1829 and took part in the negotiations and squabbles preceding the erection by I.K. Brunel of the great suspension bridge at Clifton. James Baker Pyne (1800-1875) spent some years in Bristol from about 1824 onwards and became a friend of Rippingille as well as of Jackson, and was interested, during this, his pre-Victorian phase, in poetic landscape in the manner of Danby. William James Muller (1812-45) was apprenticed to Pyne for two years and his early work also shows Danbyesque traits, although he, like Pyne, went on to work in a very different way. T.L.S. Rowbotham, who has already been mentioned for his considerable part in the production of the Braikenridge collection of Bristol drawings, was an artist of an earlier generation than Muller. However, the two worked together in 1832 and 1833 on engravings of the Bristol riots. According to Muller's biographer, N.N. Solly, Rowbotham, who was born in 1783 and died in 1853, was one

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30 Greenacre, pp. 211 and 212.

of the members of the Bristol sketching club in the 1830s.[31] Essentially, though, Rowbotham was a topographer and drawing-master. He had been teaching painting and drawing in Bath at least as early as 1811. Later he taught drawing to Braikenridge's daughters, and after moving away from Bristol in the mid 1830s he became drawing teacher at New Cross, at the Royal Naval College.[32]

The interests of Samuel Colman's artist contemporaries in Bristol can be seen, then, to have ranged from outdoor sketching to portrait painting, and from the recording of everyday-life scenes to the production of history pictures and imaginative landscapes, large and small. Their strong awareness of the high quality of Edward Bird's painting has already been noted. However, these artists were individuals with varied ways of expressing their ideas. And they had a variety of tasks to undertake - commissioned as they were to decorate, inspire, record and criticize, according to their talents and the tastes of those who wanted pictures. Acknowledging this individuality, Francis Greenacre points out, however, that 'very few of them painted better pictures once they had left the city or lost the inspiration that a coherent group of artists and amateurs provided'.[33] The coherence was undoubtedly provided by the friendly and quite regular meetings held by the artists and their amateur associates. At these gatherings two powerful influences were at work: the influence of poetry and of the exotic past, and the example and inspiration of Danby's capacity to see poetry in nineteenth-century English countryside and to express that landscape with both feeling and technical skill.

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[31] N.N. Solly, Memoirs of the Life of William James Muller (London, 1875).

[32] Greenacre, pp. 261 - 262.

[33] Greenacre, p. 31.

If Colman did not have close contact with these evening meetings and daytime picnics - and one can hardly imagine a member of Castle Green Meeting basking in the sun in the company of Rippingille and the Revd Eagles, or sitting up till the small hours over a bowl of punch - it may be questioned whether he ought to be linked with the 'Bristol School' at all. The answer to this is that Colman's own work shows clearly that he shared with the 'full members of the School', if we can apply that term to the sketching-club friends, a number of those characteristics uniquely grouped in the work of the Bristol artists of the period and that these were traits not confined to those inherited from Edward Bird.

For instance, while Colman's St James's Fair (1824) must surely derive its general composition and some of its details from Bird's Country Auction (now lost, but described in detail in George Cumberland's Catalogue of Pictures Painted by the late Edward Bird, Royal Academician - printed in Bristol in 1820) the comment made by Colman's painting through its symbolism has the Hogarthian frame of reference that is found in Rippingille's pictures of similar subjects - Bristol Fair, for example (painted by Rippingille in 1823) or The Recruiting Party (1822).

St John Preaching in the Wilderness (1821) is an earlier suggestion of Colman's familiarity with the bright, solid technique of Edward Bird. But this landscape, with its crowd of tiny figures and its stylized outcrop of rock, has interesting affinities with sixteenth-century

Netherlandish painting - a point which will be taken up again later. Eric Adams has drawn attention to characteristics of Danby's early landscapes which make it seem probable that he knew early Netherlandish painting at first hand - and built upon this knowledge as well as on his experience of Bird's work to produce the rather tight, but clearly and confidently coloured oil paintings of the 1820s.[34] Here again, Colman appears to have shared with at least one other Bristol artist a common source of inspiration - or at least a similar source - apart from the example set by Bird.

In his pamphlet commentary on St John Preaching, Colman claimed that 'the effect intended to be produced is a wild sublimity'. For guidance in achieving wildly sublime compositions, he certainly seems to have turned later on in his career to paintings by Danby. The Opening of the Sixth Seal, which Danby showed at the R.A. in 1828 is one very possible stimulant to the general arrangement of the scene in Colman's The Edge of Doom; and Danby's Delivery of Israel (1825) with its stagy beam of light, is likely to have contributed to the appearance of Colman's own version of the subject. And even the less dramatic 'effects' in St John Preaching may be connected in some mysterious way to landscapes drawn and painted by Danby and his friends.

The 'wild sublimity' to which Colman was referring in his pamphlet was 'the bursting of a cloud in a mountainous country' and there is, in the City Art Gallery, in Bristol, a small drawing by Danby in blue-grey wash which is remarkably similar in composition to Colman's St John Preaching. This sketch (Romantic Valley Scene, Pl. 16) is undated and may be an illustration of The Happy Valley from Johnson's Rasselas or, perhaps, of Cristna's search for the 'valley of everlasting life' from Danby's own poem, 'Cristna'; there is evidence from his letters that Danby made a sketch for the Rasselas scene in 1832 and a drawing of Cristna's journey a long time before that.[35] If the Romantic Valley Scene was carried out in Bristol around the time that the poem 'Cristna' was begun (perhaps as early as 1818) the similarity between the composition of this sketch and of Colman's St John Preaching need not be regarded as coincidental. Colman could have adopted Danby's design, or (and this is to be kept in mind as one of the possibilities) the influence could have been at work in the opposite direction. Or the two men may simply have been impressed by a painting or engraving which they had each seen, in a country house, perhaps. At all events, this composition of dominant crags, distant trees (palms or pines) and a misty, light-filled ravine, is a common denominator in two oil paintings by Colman and one by J.B. Pyne. St John Preaching shares with The Coming of the Messiah similar rock formations to those hinted at in Danby's sketch - and also the stand of tall trees lit from behind. And Pyne's Imaginary Scene (which is inscribed with the date 1828) again seems to be related. The rocky hillside and the backlighting appear again, as do the tall trees, although these have been brought into the foreground.[36]

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[34] Adams, p. 35.

Colman's The Coming of the Messiah and another important oil painting by him, known for a long time as A Romantic Landscape (Pl. 51,

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[35] Greenacre, pp. 86, 87.

[36] See Pl. 86.

David Dancing Before the Ark of the Lord) both have a number of features in common with Danby's An Enchanted Island (1824-25) and his The Embarkation of Cleopatra (1827). Pyne's Imaginary Scene and Samuel Jackson's watercolour, A Land of Dreams (Pl. 85) which was exhibited in Bristol in 1832, can also be seen as linked with these particular landscape fantasies by Danby. This intriguing network of relationships will be referred to again in Section C.

The Imaginary Scene shows Pyne doing something which Danby did often in his Bristol paintings - inventing a landscape which is not necessarily tied to a literary text. Whereas John Eagles was obsessed with the notion of landscape as a 'Vision of Fairy Land' - encouraging his friends to create visual fantasies based on Spenser's Faerie Queene - Danby was able to respond directly to the landscape he saw himself, and to paint it 'poetically', both as contemproary views raised to a level high above mere topography, and as fantasies complete with exotic details but always relying on observation for special effects of light and 'poetic' arrangements of rocks and trees. To achieve poetic landscapes, Danby simply either chose real scenes looked at from a poet's viewpoint or arranged selected rocks and waterfalls to produce the imaginary landscapes he conceived to be poetic. This Pyne was clearly able to do too, in his Imaginary Scene. The rocks and the foreground figures might easily fit into a sketch of the Avon Gorge. The waterfall might be Welsh. It is the arrangement of these features, along with the swans and the fishing boat, which is 'poetic' - concentrating the attention of the viewer on the mysterious shadows, the dramatic trees, the unknown and alluring distances. It is difficult to imagine Samuel Colman painting a view which is poetic in this sense.

Colman's imaginative landscapes, from the large apocalyptic scenes such as The Coming of the Messiah to the much more intimate watercolours, are, like Revd Eagles' sketches, associated with the artist's reading. Obviously Colman set out, in each case, to give visual interpretation to a verbal idea - usually a passage from the Bible. His concern - much more specific than Eagles' aim - was for his pictures to be 'read' and (as will be demonstrated in later chapters) he selected various visual symbols which would make his meaning clear to viewers familiar with a traditional vocabulary of religious imagery. Perhaps it is not surprising that his landscapes, as well as his figures, express a cerebral, rather than an emotional attitude to nature. A tree in a biblical scene by Colman will be more likely to look something like one in a painting by Danby (or more predictably, John Martin) than like a tree in Leigh Woods, where Danby sketched trees. The language of art clearly worked more potently on Colman's imagination than the natural appearance of his surroundings; and presumably a tree conventionalized by Turner or Martin would appeal to Colman precisely because it had been engrafted with meaning - grandeur, perhaps, or timelessness - and he could understand how to make a similar tree part of his own code, to communicate his own message. This is not to say that Colman ignored nature, but that he did not refer at all directly to the natural world for ideas and inspiration for his major paintings. A natural object - a tree, a waterfall, an interesting crag or pool - might actually be sketched by Colman, but only because his experience of looking at pictures by Claude and Salvator Rosa, Turner and Martin, and Francis Danby gave him 'permission' to pay attention to his particular 'Martinesque' or 'Danbyesque' feature of the landscape. The tree, or waterfall, would be transformed in the studio, so that in Colman's finished picture it would appear recognizable, not as a real tree or particular waterfall, but as the kind of tree or waterfall which might have been painted by Martin or Danby. This kind of process will be illustrated in Section C.

Considering the small number of paintings by Colman which can be counted today, it is likely that most of his working time was taken up with the production of portraits and topographical pictures, and with teaching. The portraits will have disappeared into attics and the views will probably not excite in their owners any abounding curiosity to identify the painter, or an urge to share the pictures with the world. However, as noted already, the artist's sketchbook and a group of watercolour landscapes substantiate the impression given by the Distant View of Bristol that Colman did draw and paint specific scenes and naturalistic scenery.

Plate 8 shows one of the watercolours. This may be quite an early landscape - datable to the period 1815-23, at a guess. Certainly it is bolder in handling and lower in tone than St John Preaching and a considerable contrast in these respects to the delicate, stylized watercolours shown in Plates 95 to 103. The distant ruins and the weathered foreground tree may be picturesque clichés but the confident drawing and restrained colouring bear out the apparent claim of the illegible inscription that this is a particular view which Colman had visited and sketched. The general conception of the picture as a coloured drawing shows Colman at a stage in his development not very different from Danby's position in the years 1815-19. Plate 7 shows another watercolour by Colman, again illegibly inscribed, and obviously dating from about the same period. The rugged valley scene shown in Plate 9 is also quite sombre in colour. More carefully finished than the other two, it also appears rather tighter in handling, and the picturesque elements have been given greater prominence; it may date from a slightly later period.

'Burrington Coombe nr Langford' is the inscription on the back of a drawing by Colman which also appears to date from before 1821 (Pl. 10). The paper has an 1818 watermark, and the date appears to be confirmed by the boldness of the pencil strokes and the attention to detail very evident in the composition notes scribbled in various places to remind the artist that here there was 'ivy' and there there was 'dust' or 'darker water'. Near the top of the biggest tree (to the right) the notes read, 'a green light through'.

An interest in backlighting can also be seen in a very different view by Colman - a painting of Tintern Abbey (Pl. 22). The subject is conventional enough, and the drawing and painting somewhat cramped and hesitant, but the little gem-like view into the distance beyond the ruin is surprising and pleasing, and suggests that Colman was aware of the effectiveness of similar lighting arrangements in a number of paintings carried out by Danby in the early 1820s in a crisp, bright style. Danby's Clifton Rocks from Rownham Fields (City Art Gallery, Bristol) is one example.[37]

The drawings in Colman's sketchbook vary considerably in subject matter and in degree of finish. Some are quite factual studies of boats, plants, people. One of the drawings of a boat is reproduced in Plate 27. Other sketches, like the one shown in Plate 25, are complete compositions - in this case a pleasant river-side hamlet with trees which are dominated by a large bottle kiln. Millstones rest importantly (and picturesquely) in the foreground, a large tree balancing the design on the left. The book also contains a sketch of Firfield, the home of John Hare; and a pretty avenue leading into a distant hillside view is also marked 'Firfield'. The drawing of the house is shown in Plate 74.

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[37] For a reproduction see Greenacre, p. 53. Danby's colouring (and poetic intimacy) at this period can be seen in the frontispiece, Boys Sailing a Little Boat.

Like the drawing of Burrington Combe, some of the sketches in the book were clearly made as preparatory studies for oil paintings or watercolours. There is a watercolour version of the Firfield avenue, for instance (Pl. 75), and Colman's oil painting of the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the great Clifton Suspension Bridge (a picture which has been in the collection of the City Art Gallery in Bristol for many years) is an easily recognizable relative of a lightly pencilled drawing in the book (Plates 108 and 109). A watercolour of Nightingale Valley, Brislington, (Pl. 101) is also matched by a sketch (Pl. 102).

The on-the-spot sketch of the festive occasion of the laying of the foundation stone must date from August 1836, and - judging by their fanciful style, especially in the watercolour versions - the Firfield and Nightingale Valley views may also belong to the 1830s. Some of the drawings may have been made much earlier, however; the book is watermarked 'J. Whatman Turkey Mill 1821'.

Whatever their date, a number of the sketchbook drawings show that Colman was choosing subject-matter quite similar to that selected by other Bristol artists, in the 1820s and 1830s. For example, there is a handsome view of the Avon Gorge in Colman's book. Inscribed 'Clifton', its high viewpoint and fairly full use of the picture space for a 'description' of the actual gorge give it kinship to Samuel Jackson's views of the same area. It is also tempting to see the influence of Rowbotham in Colman's drawings of boats, large houses, woodland cottages, and hillsides dotted with trees and half-hidden houses. Like Colman, Rowbotham was a ladies' drawing master, and the picturesque formulae he sometimes used may have been attractive to Colman - or perhaps they simply shared interests; they were close contemporaries, after all. One cannot doubt that if they did know one another, Colman would have been impressed by the skill shown in Rowbotham's views of Bristol and its surroundings.

The two pages from the Colman sketchbook which are reproduced in Plates 28 and 26 reflect his work at what is perhaps its closest point of approach to Danby's view of the Bristol landscape. These should be compared with Danby's painting of The Snuff Mill, Stapleton which appears in Plate 29, and with The Frome at Stapleton - a Danby watercolour (reproduced in Greenacre, p. 8). The pen and wash drawing (Pl. 28) might well be a scene on the River Frome between Stapleton and Frenchay, though there is no hint of the lyricism so well expressed in Danby's painting. The mood of the pencil drawing, however, is nearer to Danby's. The trees, with their winding creepers and long curving shadows, lean gracefully towards the river. A path follows the uneven contours of the ground and draws away to the cottage and the little bridge. Someone is strolling on the path and another figure can just be glimpsed fishing from the bridge. There is an atmosphere of quiet and privacy unusual, if not unique, in Colman's surviving work.

On the whole, Samuel Colman's sketchbook is rather ordinary, and if its pages and the early oil paintings of landscapes such as the Distant View of Bristol were all the evidence of his talent which survived he would be relegated to a very minor place among English painters of the nineteenth century. Fortunately there is much more evidence to consider. The very fact that Colman did not view as poetry the natural landscape of rural Somerset and Gloucestershire, and that he did not even attempt to give it poetic associations by peopling it with knights and their ladies (as John Eagles was in the habit of doing) makes all the more exciting the total transformation of landscape which takes place in his biblical fantasies and major apocalyptic paintings.

Again, in these imaginative biblical scenes, Colman's recognition of the lead Danby had taken is quite clear. But, just as Danby himself was open to many new influences after he left Bristol, Colman, too, was by the late 1820s drawing inspiration from sources outside the 'Bristol School'.

CHAPTER THREE

The Claims of Dissent

A little later it will be demonstrated that the artistic trends followed by Francis Danby in his London period were characteristic of a number of European painters, whose work revealed the tensions of a changing society, the pessimism of those overwhelmed by change, and the dreams of those who felt disoriented and who were searching for a spiritual compass. Samuel Colman adopted the same art forms (or many of them) but the most interesting pictures which resulted from his assimilation of contemporary culture are those which reveal his fundamental distance from that culture.

Sunday Morning, Going to Church (Pl. 72) is definitely not one of Colman's imaginative biblical scenes in the Romantic mode. However, it is a very interesting picture, since it supplies or confirms information about the kind of building Zion Chapel was and the kind of people who attended services there about the time when Colman was a member.

I have noted already that Henry Cozens, who was Secretary of Zion when he wrote its history in 1930, made the claim that the painting of the chapel portrayed it as it was in 1832. Cozens's chatty account of Zion cannot be relied on for accuracy, but he did have access to the collective memory of the congregation as well as to the church records, so his comments on the picture[1] are worth repeating:

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[1] Cozens, pp. 32, 33.

> The high-bodied carriage shewn is that of Mr. John Hare, the Hare seat was in the gallery near to the clock. Notice the fashions of the day, the poke bonnets of the ladies, and the high hats of the men. St. Paul's Church and the Jail are shewn.
>
> But I would draw special attention to the gorgeous figure of a man standing at the top of the steps. In his hand is a staff of office, he is there evidently to receive distinguished visitors, also to be a terror to small and troublesome boys. This figure in our painting is no fancy of the artist, neither was this magnificent figure simply hired for the occasion. But he was 'Zion's Own' Beadle, and flourished as such in the years 1830 to 1838.
>
> He makes his appearance in our Cash Book, drawing the Salary of £1.12.6d per quarter, during the years mentioned.

Is there perhaps a hint here that the prosperity of the nouveau rich industrialist had been used to pay for a pompous display of piety? That might be unfair, since in the 1830s beadles and smart carriages were not uncommon sights outside the places of worship of middle class Dissenters. Nevertheless John Hare does not appear to have hidden from his left hand what his right hand was doing; his good works were 'noticed' in the columns of the local newspapers and his name was seldom absent from any list of subscriptions to a reputable charity. Zion Chapel was built to seat over 850 people and cost £4000, all from Hare's pocket, as the press noted. The newspapers also took an interest in the fact that the new meeting house was opened on 15 June 1830, and that the morning sermon (it was a Tuesday, but there were services of celebration in both the morning and the evening) was given by the Revd Dr Thomas Chalmers:[2]

> Our city has been honoured by a visit from that great northern luminary, Dr. Chalmers. It is to be supposed that an individual of such erudite learning and transcendant talents excited no inconsiderable degree of interest among us, and accordingly the two services in which he engaged were attended by the leading families and most respectable individuals in the city and neighbourhood.

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[2] Bristol Mercury, 22 June 1830, p. 4, col. 1.

The respectability of Zion Chapel is very much to the fore in Samuel Colman's painting. Apart from the beadle, the building itself has a solid respectability. Its name appears on the pediment above a no-nonsense rectangular building entered through a columned porch. (The interior of the building was rather more elegant; Plate 71 gives some idea of the appearance of the pulpit from which Dr Chalmers gave his address.) The railings enclosing the grounds of the church appear more decorative and the trees relieve the plainness of the stuccoed walls.

The people crossing the road, making their way into the church are decidedly respectable - families with children, one or two women on their own, a widow with two daughters. The roadsweeper is hard at work, brushing a pathway for them. A barefoot beggar-woman sits on the pavement near the railings of the chapel, with her baby and two young children; a man stops to give alms to her - and to point towards the door of the church - a sanctimonious touch for which it is hard to forgive Colman.

Approaching the church steps from the left - partially hidden by the railings and trees - is a troupe of girls in bonnets and uniform collars and aprons. As is frequently the case in paintings by Colman, there is some ambiguity about the scale of the figures; these girls might be teenagers, or they might be children. In 1832, according to the Annual Bristol Directory, Mrs John Hare was Treasurer of the Bristol Infant School, which was conducted in Meadow Street, St Paul's. And in 1835, again on the evidence of the directory for that year, Zion Chapel itself had an infant school. Also by 1835, a 'Girls' Sewing-work School' was being held at Zion. It is likely that this is the class being paraded to chapel, in Colman's depiction of Sunday morning in Bedminster.

All in all, Sunday Morning, Going to Church is a portrait of a well-ordered community of good citizens, stepping to church very properly of a Sunday and extending the hospitality of the house of God to their neighbours. In fact, this is one picture of a congregation which might be described quite casually as Evangelical, were it not for the fact of Samuel Colman's membership; for his pictures are not all Evangelical in the messages they project, and the very association of visionary art with the Evangelical Movement is an anomaly in itself. What emerges, when one begins to question the apparent Evangelicalism of the Zion congregation and to examine Dissent in Bristol in Colman's day, is a sort of interdenominational traffic jam. This makes it necessary to step back a little and attempt to take in (very quickly) the general picture of religion in England in the early nineteenth century and the interchange of ideas which would have shaped the Independency known to Colman.

Surprisingly, the Regency, with all its social frivolity, and the extravagant reign of George IV which followed it, were periods of growth for many religious organizations. It was an evangelical age. In part this was because the arminianism of John Wesley and his followers had been so diligently extended up and down the country that by the end of the eighteenth century it had invaded the traditionally Calvinist theology of Baptists and Independents who began to join the Methodists in open campaigns to let their fellow creatures know that 'all flesh shall see the salvation of God'.

It is this message, from Luke 3.6, which Samuel Colman was at pains to transmit in St John Preaching, in 1821. And when Dr Chalmers, who was of course a Presbyterian minister, 'preached in' the new church at Zion Chapel in 1830, his text was Romans 10.4: 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Two days after the opening of the new chapel, Chalmers delivered another sermon in Bristol - this time at Castle Green, and in aid of the Bristol Auxiliary British and Foreign School Society. In a long account of the address given in the 22 June Mercury (page 4), a reporter observed the emphasis Chalmers placed on the 'universality' of God's mercy:

> The song of the angels was 'Good will to man,' not to certain men, to the exclusion of others. He had the word of God for his warranty when he said, let the sinner be who he might he would cheer him on simply in virtue of his being a man. It was not for him to say who would or would not enter the kingdom of heaven; but wherever faith in God was found, he did not doubt of acceptance. He looked in the Bible, and he found that by one comprehensive sweep it took the whole world within its saving influence - that it extended its mercies to all the children of men - and that the unbelief of man is the only obstacle to its progress . . . I speak the very message of the Almighty, and if you think otherwise of God, you do him great injustice: you withhold your Faith from a Father of mercy, and tremble before a malignant being of your own creating.

This is obviously the kind of sermon which, in Erik Routley's words, 'shifted the emphasis . . . from primary interest in the purity of the local company of saints to primary interest in adding to the company of saints'.[3] The shift in emphasis had come from within the Anglican Church, and although, by the period we are considering, Wesleyans were looked on as Dissenters (New Dissent, as opposed to Old Dissent, which consisted of Independents, Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers) classic social-gospel Evangelical Christianity was defined in large part by groups within the Church of England. The 'Clapham Sect', which centred around the banker Henry Thornton and his friend William Wilberforce, is the most obvious example. The group existed as such between 1792, when Thornton invited Wilberforce to share his home in Clapham, and about 1830. Most of the members of the group were MPs. They took an interest in a number of 'good causes' but their most notable parliamentary success was the abolition of the slave trade, leading eventually to the end of slavery in the British colonies. The Sect published its own journal, the Christian Observer, which was edited by Zachary Macaulay from 1802 until 1816. It also gave financial support to the Church Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Religious Tract Society, and to the teaching and writing of Hannah More. This brings us to another reason which has often been given for the Evangelical Revival, or for the phase of it which is covered by the years of the Clapham Sect.

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[3] The Story of Congregationalism (London, 1961), p. 65.

The French Revolutionary Wars produced strong feelings of unease among many people in England. Even among those who had welcomed the Revolution at first many turned away from it in disgust and fear as time went on. The rejection of Christianity in France inspired a rather predictable upsurge of interest in religion in Britain, and those who came to the Church probably did so because it represented stability, morality and patriotism. Society may have expressed mild amusement at the 'puritanism' of Hannah More, but the critics gave a good reception to her books - such as An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World (1791) and the novel, Coelebs in Search of a Wife (1808). It is well known that her Village Politics, which appeared in 1792, was an out and out attempt to counteract the subversive influence of Paine's Rights of Man. There was an enormous demand for the 'Cheap

Repository Tracts'. These were blatantly counter-revolutionary - an attempt by Hannah More and her supporters to teach the poor to be contented and humble, temperate and patriotic, and trustful, not only of God, but of their 'betters'. It is interesting that in spite of all her efforts to keep the working classes happily in their place, Hannah More was often accused of being dangerously subversive, because she distributed a little learning to the poor.

A similar combination of High Tory with ardent evangelist and anti-slavery campaigner is to be seen in William Thorp, the minister of Bristol's Castle Green Independent Chapel. But the strongest link between the Evangelical branch of the Church and the many Dissenting congregations and individuals who adopted the word Evangelical with a capital 'E' as part of their self-definition was the impetus to spread the gospel to as many people as possible (including slaves), to bring sinners to repentance, and to improve the moral tone of society. The aims of the Evangelicals in these respects were shared with many groups and individuals who were simply evangelical with a small 'e' and who might wear quite different political colours.

Whether properly termed Evangelical or evangelical, the new Bible and missionary societies were joint ventures of Church and Dissent, or of several sects of Dissenters, as were some of the new periodicals of the day. For example, the London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, was organized by Dissenters of various denominations; the Religious Tract Society (1799) was an outreach project of both Baptists and Independents (among others); and the British and Foreign Bible Society which began its work in 1804 represented both Church and Dissent. The Evangelical Magazine (founded in 1824) published the views of writers from a number of denominations. On a more sophisticated level, The Eclectic Review, under its Congregationalist editor, Josiah Conder, supplied its readers with the opinions and ideas of contributors of many persuasions, and The Nonconformist (first issued in 1841) also expressed itself as the voice of Dissent, not merely of the Congregationalism of its first editor, Edward Miall.

With a considerable show of unity, the various evangelical denominations set about their campaign for the abolition of colonial slavery. Jointly they supported prison reform and the prevention of cruelty to children and animals; and although Church and Dissent were at odds over the teaching of the poor, the friction between National Schools (controlled by the Church) and British Schools was caused, not so much by differences in educational philosophy, as by the partiality the government showed in providing funds for the Church-oriented system.

A further sign of interdenominational links at this period can be seen in the friendships at a personal level, both within Dissent and between Dissenters and members of the Church.

Colman's own mysterious and perhaps misleading connections with Quakers have been pointed out already, as well as his friendship with a Church of England clergyman. At Zion Chapel, Colman's home church for at least several years during the 1830s, the congregation included Joseph Cottle, who was the friend of men of such diverse theological opinions as Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge, as well as of the Baptist minister, John Foster of Stapleton. Anne Hare, who was Cottle's sister (and John Hare's second wife) is recorded in the Zion minute book as having come from Broadmead Baptist Chapel. The younger John Hare (later to be Sir John Hare) was one of the Zion trustees. He was a friend and supporter of Edward Protheroe, M.P., who was a Churchman, and an acquaintance of William Wilberforce, who was, of course, an Evangelical Anglican. When Zion Chapel was opened, in 1830, the sermon for the occasion was preached, as we have seen by Dr Thomas Chalmers of Glasgow, who was a celebrated Presbyterian.

Cooperation among Dissenters as a self-aware entity distinct from the larger body of Evangelicals was in some respects the banding together of people who were forced by their religious and political disabilities to share grievances and combine politically to make their voices heard.

During the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars the Tory party in power in Britain was charged with defending the State and the Church with which the State was associated. Because Dissent was fundamentally opposed to that union of Church and State, and because Dissenters were limited politically by the Test and Corporations Acts, and therefore placed in a position of inferiority and of potential hostility to the authorities, the government suspected nonconformists of susceptibility to acts of treason. Specific restrictions were frequently placed upon Dissenters and progress towards the redress of religious grievances was halted. As F.E. Mineka has pointed out, 'Dissent, by the very fact of its dissidence, was compelled to engage in political action if only in self protection'.[4]

Some historians claim that New Dissent tended to stand apart from politics, Methodists being particularly shy of involvement in nonspiritual matters. But others have emphasized the close ties between Methodism and the working classes and have suggested that the meeting house often became a political gathering place or that it was seen as such by Tory landowners and clergymen confronted by uprising labourers. Charlotte Brontë deals with this view in Shirley, where her Yorkshire manufacturer hero is faced with the economic and social dilemma posed by the redundant poor and their champions in 'Methody'.

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[4] The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838 (New York, 1972), p. 152.

Increasingly, Whig politicians and Dissenters of many theological persuasions made common cause (or simply reinforced traditional alignments) to triumph over Lord Sidmouth's Bill to limit the licencing of Dissenting ministers (1811) and to witness the passing of the Toleration Act 1812.[5] Field preaching, or itinerant ministry involved more than Methodists by this time; the right to send out missionaries to the poor was a matter of concern to many evangelical churches. Samuel Colman's evident interest in this subject will be discussed in Section C.

In 1828 came the repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts - a long fought-for success - which placed Dissenters on much more sound political footing than they had stood on since the Great Ejectment of 1662.

Meanwhile the growth in converts urged the need for tighter control on those denominations (particularly Baptists and Independents) which did not already (like the Quakers) practise a system of national organization. County groupings of Baptists and Independents led eventually to national unions. The Baptist General Union was formed in 1812 and the Congregational Union of England and Wales was achieved in 1832, after many years of debate.

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[5] Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century, edited by David M. Thompson (London, 1972), pp. 29-37.

Ultimately, as D.M. Thompson points out, 'The effect of these developments was to increase denominational self-consciousness, partly at the expense of the old sense of a common Dissenting interest'. More to the point here, 'the very success of Nonconformists in obtaining the redress of some of their grievances during the 1820s and 1830s reduced the need for common action'.[6] In An Autobiography written many years afterwards, J. Guinness Rogers recalled the complacency of some of the very successful Congregational ministers of London in the 1830s: 'They had come into full enjoyment of a liberty which their fathers hardly anticipated, and they were very much disposed to the "rest and be thankful" policy of Lord John Russell, who represented the extreme form of Liberalism which any of them approved. They were so satisfied with mere toleration that they hardly dreamt of religious equality'.[7]

If the complacency deplored by Rogers extended to laymen, Samuel Colman was not part of it. He must have been forced to give thought to the strong protest against Catholic Emancipation which was voiced by the Revd Thorp, and to the liberal commitments of John Hare and of the younger John Hare, deeply involved in the Reform interest in Bristol politics. Colman's pictures show awareness of these themes, well into the 1830s. For that reason Section B will analyse the political content of these paintings in some detail.

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[6] Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century, p. 4.

[7] London, 1903, pp. 158-9.

Overlaid against these moral and political concerns was a pervasive interest in Christian eschatology. This was not a preoccupation of Dissenters alone, although Dissenting preachers stood to realize a great deal of evangelistic success by emphasizing Bible prophecies and the hope they suggested to those who felt themselves to be a spiritual Israel in bondage. In Section D I shall examine the 'prophetical controversy' (as it was called in the 1820s) in a little more detail. It must be stressed here, however, that Congregationalists in general did not tend towards 'enthusiastic' millenarianism. They set no dates for the return of the Messiah, adopted no prophets, nor engaged in anything but academic study of the Apocalypse. There is no excuse given to the scholar using the 'filter' of Colman's denominational associations for regarding his paintings as products of a messianic cult or other aberrant millenarian sect. Nevertheless, the analysis of Bible prohecies - which became popular at the time of the French Revolution (as during other crises) - occupied the minds of a great many people during Colman's lifetime. Clergymen and nonconformist ministers made studies on an academic level; books and articles in the religious periodicals fed the curiosity of the middle class reader of almost every denominational persuasion; and popular 'chapbooks' and tracts on prophecy excited the imagination of the poor, in town and countryside.[8] Eschatology, on any of these levels, stands as a fascinating corollary to the moral reform movement.

Samuel Colman's own pamphlet on St John Preaching in the Wilderness proclaims his awareness of what he calls 'the luxuriant language of Prophecy'. So his relish for the words of the Bible is not in doubt. However, unlike Constable or John Martin, or the American painter of religious subjects, Thomas Cole, Colman did not leave behind a library or a list of his books. On the other hand, while one cannot say, 'Samuel Colman read this, and therefore must have been aware of that', one can say with some assurance that the reading done by serious students of the Bible in the early nineteenth century (and by the ministers in charge of congregations throughout the English-speaking part of the western world) would have included certain texts as a matter of course.

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[8] See J.F.C. Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850 (London, 1979), pp. 51-54.

I have already mentioned that in Colman's childhood most people were brought up reading Pilgrim's Progress, and since there were frequent editions of collected works by Bunyan, one may assume that there was a market for them, throughout Colman's lifetime.

Bible commentaries were also published in edition after edition, the most famous of them being Philip Doddridge's Family Expositor (an eighteenth-century classic), Matthew Henry's Exposition of the Old and New Testaments (first published in 1706), and Scott's Commentary (a work in six volumes by the Revd Thomas Scott, published originally in serial form between 1788 and 1792). All these commentaries (and others which will be referred to in this thesis) were widely read by Protestants of every hue on the denominational scale. Matthew Henry will be cited frequently because he was an Independent, and also because his commentary was regarded as a standard work by two Baptist ministers in the Bristol area who had friendly links with Colman's home church.

John Foster of Stapleton mentions Henry's Exposition as a household name.[9] Foster's friend, the Revd Robert Hall of Broadmead Chapel, Bristol, was reading Matthew Henry's commentaries in the late 1820s. According to his biographer, John Greene, 'he observed, "I have often read portions of it and consulted it; but I have now begun with the first chapter of Genesis, and I mean to read the work through regularly; I have set myself, sir, two chapters every morning, and I anticipate it as a feast". . . I asked his opinion of Scott's commentary. "O, it is a good work, sir; but it is not to be compared with Henry: there is not that unction of spirit which there is in Henry."'[10] It is interesting that Greene also draws attention to Mr Hall's love of the hymns of Isaac Watts: 'His partiality for the poetry of Dr Watts [an Independent] was great, and he frequently expressed his surprise at the taste of his Baptist brethren, in introducing Dr. Rippon's collection.'

I shall take it as a matter of course that Samuel Colman would have been guided, at least at second hand, by the theological views of Bunyan, Henry and Watts. He is also likely to have been a reader of one or more of the religious journals of the day - possibly the Evangelical Magazine, the Congregational Magazine, or the Eclectic Review.

Against this background of the religious climate of Samuel Colman's lifetime, and of the general concerns of Nonconformists, we may now give some consideration to the arts within this context, and more particularly to attitudes held by Dissenters towards the arts.

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[9] Ryland, II, 26.

[10] This and the quotation following it are taken from John Greene, Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. (London, 1832), pp. 203-204 and pp. 30-31.

In a series of lectures published in book form in 1978, Donald Davie made a vigorous attack on the long-held notion that culture had no part in Dissent. 'Distrust of intellect, of rational discourse and free enquiry, and distrust of the arts - these attitudes, though they can be found among Puritans (for philistines can crop up anywhere), seem not to be characteristic of seventeenth-century Puritanism, and certainly do not characterize its lineal descendant, eighteenth-century Dissent. And yet common usage, as we all know . . . asserts the contrary.' His explanation is that 'the Establishment . . . has in every generation, including our own, disseminated the canard that Dissent is of its nature philistine; and . . . in the nineteenth century, Dissent cooperated, by becoming as philistine as the Church had always said it was'.[11] He then goes on to lay the blame for the anti-intellectualism of nineteenth-century nonconformity on the Evangelical movement. This point, of course, raises questions which must be asked later in regard to the colour of Samuel Colman's Congregationalism. But for the moment it may be pointed out that Robert Hall, whose views on Matthew Henry have just been pinpointed, is singled out by Davie as an example of the kind of Orthodox Dissenter who respected traditional nonconformist scholarship, and indeed participated in it, not only as a famous preacher, but as a contributor to the Eclectic Review. Davie may be correct when he says that 'it was inevitable the conservative Dissent that Hall stood for should have been swamped before the new century had advanced at all far'.[12] But it is important that Hall, and Foster (who also wrote for the Eclectic Review) were contemporaries of Samuel Colman, and that they had close links with Zion Chapel members and that they and their friends shared interests in poetry and politics, and in the visual arts.

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[11] A Gathered Church (London, 1978), pp. 56-57.

[12] Davie, p. 65.

It must be stressed that the kind of intellectualism supported by the Dissenting tradition of education and of liturgy was decidedly verbal. Songs and sermons and scientific treatises were in plentiful production, but creative visual artists were rare, beyond the level of craftsmen. For the expression of their Christian belief, Dissenters felt at liberty to use the word. Spoken and written, it was authorized by God. But the making of any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth - at least for a religious purpose - was avoided, on the whole, as taboo, or at the very least liable to be thought Romish. Admiring and collecting works of art brought into play other criteria.

I have said that in Colman's day Dissenters had a strong respect for the popular works of John Bunyan, the sermons of John Owen and the prose and poetry of Isaac Watts. Dissenting writers of the nineteenth century who attracted attention included the aforementioned Foster and Hall, and influential journalists like Conder and Miall. And of course there were also the (often female) writers of copious verse for adults and children. There were even novelists (like Amelia Opie and Sarah Stickney Ellis) with a claim to being Dissenters. Yet it required the most persistent individuality - like that of William Blake - to allow an artist to ignore the taboos. Orthodox Dissenters remained almost entirely without representation among artists; and, fearing association with 'Popery', those nonconformists who did paint or produce engravings usually chose secular themes. A search for a range of subjects that would be suited to a Protestant philosophy of art seems to have taken place when, in 1780, George III commissioned Benjamin West to work for him at Windsor Castle. This point will be taken up again in Chapter Four, but it is interesting to note here that West was brought up as a Quaker although his grandiloquent manner of painting (which failed to establish a uniquely Protestant style) is hardly what one would associate with the simplicity of the Society of Friends. John Martin, famous like West, for his apocalyptic imagery, also came from a Dissenting background. On the whole, however, nineteenth-century artists who were practising Dissenters were so few in number that nowadays they tend to be branded as oddities before any examination has been made of their lives or of their work.

Among Independents the Taylor family of Ongar stands out because it produced two engravers (Isaac Taylor, father and son) and two hymn-writers, Ann Taylor Gilbert and Jane Taylor - quite apart from an impressive body of scholarship and scientific experimentation.[13] Isaac Taylor, senior (1759-1829), was pastor of the Independent congregation at Bucklersbury Lane, Colchester, and later preacher at Ongar, where his family grew up. He is remembered as a successful engraver and Bible illustrator, contributing to Boydell's Shakespeare and engraving for Boydell's Illustrations of Holy Writ (London, 1813-15). He wrote books for children, including Bunyan explained to a Child, being Pictures and Poems founded upon the Pilgrim's Progress (London, 1824, 1825). Isaac Taylor the younger (1787-1865) became a scholar (and incidentally also an Anglican), but while he was still a young man he learned his father's craft of engraving and produced original and interesting designs for his Illustrations of Holy Writ (1820). He appears to have been influenced by Fuseli and Blake, but his style has an economy which is very pleasing and individual, though not infused (so far as I can tell) with the complex meanings that pervade Samuel Colman's paintings.

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[13] A great deal can be learned about the Congregational way of life from The Autobiography of Mrs. Gilbert (London, 1874).

The Taylors did not depend for their livelihood on their work as artists. Nor did Samuel Lucas of Hitchin (1805-1870) who was a business-man, first in merchant shipping and later as a partner in his family's brewery at Hitchin. Lucas was simply a painter in his spare time, but he spent many hours looking at London art collections and even went to the Continent in 1829 to study the Dutch masters and to enjoy the landscapes of South Germany and Britanny. His first wife (who died in 1849) was Matilda Holmes of Norwich, a pupil of J.S. Cotman. Lucas began to show his work at the Royal Academy in 1828, and also exhibited at the British Institution, receiving favourable reviews from the critics. He was attracted by pleasant rural scenes and made portraits and pastel sketches of his neighbours. Nothing more overtly religious appears in his work than 'portraits' of Quaker meetings.[14]

The restraint shown in Lucas's pictures may be due in part to his peaceful habits and philosophy of life. If they make a religious statement, it must surely be an affirmation of the contentment of the artist with his quiet world. However, the restraint, the limitation in subject matter, may also be the result of his parents' and brother William's wariness and criticism of Samuel's love of art. His preoccupation with his hobby and pursuit of skill through the study of Paul Potter and Peter de Wint appeared to these relatives to be a 'rage' quite out of keeping with the Quaker mode of living, although it is worth noting that Samuel's father, the diarist William Lucas, actually bought some of his son's paintings.[15]

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[14] A Complete Catalogue of the Work of Samuel Lucas was compiled by his niece, Mary Sewell, and published in 1872.

If these remarks about Lucas the Quaker confirm the isolated position of Samuel Colman as a professional artist and an active member of a Dissenting church, they are also of interest because of Colman's known links with Quakers. They therefore prompt further examination of the position of the Society of Friends as regards the visual arts.

Thomas Clarkson's A Portraiture of Quakerism, first published in 1806, is a useful and explicit source of information about Friends' everyday customs and priorities. Commenting on furniture used in Quaker homes, Clarkson says, 'Turkey carpets are in use, though generally gaudy, on account of their wearing better than others; but we see no chairs with satin bottoms and gilded frames, no magnificent pier glasses, no superb chandeliers . . . at least, in all my intercourse with Friends, I have never observed such things.'[16] People violating the advice given them in Meetings on the subject of furniture would be few, suggests Clarkson. He goes on to describe three prints which were often to be seen on the walls of Quaker homes: an engraving after Benjamin West of the famous treaty between William Penn and the American Indians; the diagram of a slave ship, and a plan of Ackworth School (a Friends' institution). These prints were not so much decorations as homilies. Some well-to-do members of the Society had inherited paintings and engravings, but even such collections would not normally be displayed as ornaments. 'Prints in frames, if hung up promiscuously in a room would be considered as ornamental furniture, or as furniture for show. They would therefore come under the denomination of superfluities', Clarkson explains. 'Yet there are amateurs among them, who have a number and variety of prints in their possession. But these appear chiefly in collections, bound together in books or preserved in portfolios'. Friends in general 'are not brought up to admire such things'.

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[15] Reginald L. Hine, Hitchin Worthies: Four Centuries of English Life (London, 1932), p. 221.

[16] This, and the other quotations from Clarkson, are taken from pp. 76 and 77 of a mid nineteenth-century edition of his book, printed under the title, A Portraiture of the Christian Profession and Practice of the Society of Friends (Glasgow, 1847).

It was not until early in the twentieth century that the Society of Friends officially recognised the possible benefits of art.[17] Therefore Bernard Barton of Woodbridge, bank clerk and Quaker poet, was definitely ahead of his time. He was an avid collector of paintings and prints, and in an 1830 letter to artist John Linnell he stated his views about the apparent contradiction in his own habits between plain living and connoisseurship:

> So far as my own taste, feeling and judgment are competent to decide the point, I see no irreconcilable hostility between the religious principles of Friends and the indulgence of taste for a painting. But I am quite aware that a Quaker painter would be a still greater novelty than a Quaker poet, and am almost inclined to doubt whether the former would not have a still more difficult and delicate task to perform than the latter if he hoped to be regarded by the Body as orthodox and consistent. Abstractedly, there can be no necessary hostility between Quakerism and painting, because I know of no good reason why it should be more unquakerly to draw or paint a beautiful landscape than to build a fine house or lay out and embellish the grounds. But it is easy to the-

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[17] Christian Practice, being the Second Part of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (1925), pp. 80-81.

> orise on elementary principles, which, when put in practice, involve much difficulty and perplexity. My own nutshell of a house is as full of prints and pictures as I can well hang it; but my indulgence in this respect is at variance with general practice among us, and would be regarded, I doubt not, as a species of laxity and latitudinarianism by many excellent and worthy members of our society. 18

Here it may be worth noting in passing that William Miller (1796-1882), a Scot who earned his living as an engraver, was also a Quaker.

Among those Quakers in nineteenth-century England who broke the rules by delighting in art were various members of the Fox family of Falmouth. The Journals of Caroline Fox are perhaps well enough known to make their author a notable exception to the general ascetic practices of the Friends.[19] Caroline's sister Maria sketched as a hobby and received instruction from a drawing master; and Caroline herself had her portrait 'taken' in 1846 by Samuel Laurence. Because of her station in society (her father was a scientist of some distinction) Caroline made many friends in the world of letters and of art - notably John Sterling and Thomas Carlyle, but also the painter Landseer. Nevertheless she remained an active and pious member of the Society of Friends throughout her life, dressing and speaking in the traditional 'plain' manner and retaining a strong consciousness of her separation from nonbelievers.

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18 The letter is quoted by E.V. Lucas in Bernard Barton and his Friends: a record of Quiet Lives (London, 1893), p. 120. Lucas's source was Story's Life of John Linnell.

19 The Journals of Caroline Fox, 1835-71: a Selection, edited by Wendy Monk (London, 1972). See also Wilson Harris, Caroline Fox (London, 1944) and the earlier Memories of Old Friends, being Extracts from the Journals and Letters of Caroline Fox . . . from 1835 to 1871, edited by H.N. Pym (London, 1882).

In his Autobiographical Recollections the painter Charles Robert Leslie supplies a whimsical anecdote about Sir Walter Scott's attitude to Quakers such as Caroline Fox:

> During one of Sir Walter's sittings to me, the conversation turned on Quakers, and he was surprised to hear that I had painted the portraits of several, for he thought they objected to pictures, as well as to music. He said, 'They must have been what are called wet Quakers.' I assured him they were not, but he would have it that 'at least, they were damp Quakers.' 20

Social status, or class consciousness, associations with cultured friends, and the availability of money for indulgence in the arts also seem to have determined the extent to which Congregationalists allowed paintings and prints to become part of their surroundings, or of their general consciousness. The diaries of Crabb Robinson record his enduring role as cultural mentor to the Pattison family of Witham, and in particular to Elizabeth Pattison, step-mother of Robinson's friend William (who was a country solicitor) and to William Pattison's wife Hannah. To these ladies Robinson introduced the leading novels of the day. For Elizabeth Pattison discoveries in 1794 included The Mysteries of Udolpho by Mrs Radcliffe, and Charlotte Smith's The Old Manor House, both borrowed from the Colchester Circulating Library. Twenty-five years later Hannah Pattison was being urged by Robinson to read Pride and Prejudice and The Heart of Midlothian. Robinson was responsible, too, for guiding Hannah Pattison and her young sons around London on occasion. In June of 1815, for instance, he took them to see an exhibition of paintings of Napoleon by David and Lefèvre, and to hear a

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20 Autobiographical Recollections, 2 vols (London, 1860), I, 92.

lecture by Coleridge, after which the lady had the privilege of meeting Wordsworth.[21] Robinson was responsible, too, for the Pattison commission of a portrait of the two boys, Jay and William (sons of Hannah and William) by no less a master of fashionable likenesses than Sir Thomas Lawrence, with whom the diarist had social links. The painting was begun in 1811; it cost 160 guineas (rather a low price by Lawrence's customary scale of charges) and although it was worked on only intermittently by the busy and careless artist, it was hung in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1817 and was even engraved (after Lawrence's death) under the title, 'Rural Amusements'.[22]

Towards the other end of the social scale came the fictional Zachariah Coleman, the chief character in Mark Rutherford's novel, The Revolution in Tanner's Lane.[23] Zachariah was a printer by trade and a member of a secret political club in his spare time. Rutherford pictures Zachariah and his wife in rented rooms in Pike Street, London, about the year 1813: 'On the walls were portraits of Sir Francis Burdett, Major Cartwright and the mezzotint engraving of Sadler's Bunyan. Two black silhouettes - one of Zachariah and the other of his wife - were suspended on each side of the mantlepiece' (p. 13). The printer, who was a member of an Independent chapel, read not only Bunyan's 'immortal

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[21] Edith J. Morley, Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers (1938), quoted by Clyde Binfield in So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780-1920 (London, 1977), p. 47.

[22] Binfield, pp. 49-51.

[23] Mark Rutherford (pseudonym for W. Hale White), The Revolution in Tanner's Lane (London, 1887).

Progress' but also Byron's Corsair (p. 137) and, at the invitation of a new friend, he attended the theatre to see Kean play the part of Othello.

As we have seen, John Hare was one prominent Bristol Independent who owned pictures. The name of his brother-in-law, Joseph Cottle, appears in the list of subscribers published in 1800 in Macklin's new illustrated folio Bible. Crabb Robinson paid a visit to Cottle in late August, 1836, for the express purpose of looking at pictures:

> Found myself at last at Mr. Cottle's . . . He is a man of more than my age, with a club foot and otherwise lame so that he can walk with crutches only . . . he has by no means a sanctimonious face . . . though there is a simplicity in his language which is not unpleasing. He was prepared for my call and was very cordial in his reception of me. He lives in a comfortable house in a low neighbourhood and an air of neatness, not gentility, in all about him. My attention was drawn very soon to five miniatures - rather very small portraits of Southey, Coleridge, Lamb and Wordsworth; besides one of a [blank in manuscript]. Executed A.D. 1798 . . . . Cottle has also three larger portraits of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey which I like less than the smaller. 24

Disappointingly, though Robinson 'stayed several hours, and our conversation was interesting' there is no mention of Samuel Colman in this account. Robinson wanted to borrow Cottle's portrait of Charles Lamb so that it could be engraved for the frontispiece of a book. Cottle, reluctant to part with the picture, suggested 'an excellent Bristol painter would make a capital copy of it for two guineas (Branwhite by name)'.

At this period Joseph Cottle seems to have existed mainly on his memories of the Lake poets, and it is hard to believe that he did not share his pride in them and his preoccupation with his Recollections of

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24 The Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson: An Abridgement, edited by Derek Hudson (London, 1967), p. 160.

them with his entire acquaintance. It would be nice to know that Samuel Colman had been introduced to Coleridge or Wordsworth. The lack of detailed information about Colman's friendship with the Hares and with Joseph Cottle is particularly irritating in view of the fact that on the right of the roadway in Colman's painting of Zion Chapel, a stooped little man is making his way churchwards on crutches.[25]

Joseph Cottle's friend John Foster of Stapleton was a prolific letter-writer. His correspondence contains a number of remarks about the visual arts which suggest that even a Baptist minister could often quite happily spend leisure hours looking at pictures. In a letter to 'Miss B' dated 22 August 1815, Foster described a visit to the art collection of Mr Hart Davis: 'We contrived to get into the house of Mr. Hart Davis, the member for Bristol, to see several celebrated pictures. Though totally ignorant of painting, as an art, it was impossible not to be exceedingly delighted with several grand landscapes of Claude Lorrain'.[26]

We find that in 1818 Foster was attempting to justify his spending money on travel books illustrated by 'graphical art'; and a letter of 1836 makes it clear that in London 'The British Museum will be a very chief object with me; especially the apartment entirely occupied by engravings. My taste has been in that way, to an unfortunate excess, and there may be inspected innumerable fine and rare things hardly to be seen (at least by me) anywhere else. It is too likely I shall want several days, chiefly in that enormous assemblage of art and nature'.[27]

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[25] The figure may not be a portrait, of course, but simply a representative of the 'halt' who, with the poor, maimed and blind, are bidden to taste the supper of the lord, as described in Jesus' parable (Luke 14. 16-24).

[26] Ryland, II, 448. The landscapes referred to would have been the famous Altieri Claudes. Incidentally, Foster was intricately connected with Zion Chapel. Not only did he correspond with Cottle, but also with Cottle's niece, Sarah Saunders, whose sister married Zion's second pastor, the Reverend David Thomas.

The Bristol newspapers give a good idea of the variety of entertainments available in the area to the general public, including the nonconformist chapel-goer, according to inclination and individual conscience. The categories of events advertised did not change much in the years during which Samuel Colman lived in Bristol, and the 1836 Bristol Mercury may be regarded as reasonably typical of the period 1815 to 1840.

On 16 January 1836, Danby's Opening of the Sixth Seal was advertised as being on exhibition at the Bristol Institution until 6 February. It could be viewed for one shilling. The picture had the added attraction (apart from its exciting subject-matter) of having been 'lately in the collection of William Beckford, Esq., Fonthill'.

The 14 May Mercury carried a notice to the effect that selections from Handel's Messiah and from Israel in Egypt were to be performed on 19 May in the Bristol Assembly Rooms in a 'Grand Sacred Concert'.

On 21 May an advertisement appeared for an operatic version of Bulwer's Last Days of Pompeii (to be given at the Theatre Royal).

The 6 August issue of the newspaper announced the arrival at the Assembly Rooms of 'Thiodon's Mechanical and Picturesque Theatre of the Arts'; and on 17 September Thiodon's advertisement specified that he was 'now showing the Apotheosis of Napoleon! '.

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[27] Ryland, II, 27 and 303.

Attendance at the exhibition of Danby's painting and at the 'grand sacred concert' were probably quite legitimate leisure activities for a sober-minded Dissenter. The theatre is not likely to have been visited by many nonconformists. Congregationalists tended to be a middle-class denomination and a middle-class consciousness of respectability would have acted as a barrier to attendance at plays.[28] Many Congregationalists would have had a deep-rooted horror of the theatre as a place of pretence and even vice.

Like many other nonconformists, however, they may have enjoyed alternative entertainments, theatrical in effect without being presented in the theatre or by actors of the traditional mold: illustrated lectures, dramatic 'readings' and musical evenings, and a succession of mechanical gimmicks which delighted huge audiences for half a century and which were notably visual in their theatricality. These included the Eidophusikon, the panorama, cosmorama and the diorama.[29] Thiodon's Mechanical and Picturesque Theatre of the Arts (which consisted of model animals, ships and other objects moving against a painted backdrop) was part of this genre and was possibly of some influence as a visual stimulus for Samuel Colman; in 1821 the subject of one of Thiodon's presentations was 'The Ruins of Babylon'.[30]

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[28] See H.R. Martin, 'The Politics of the Congregationalists, 1830-1856' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Durham, 1971), pp. 11-14.

[29] See Michael Baker, The Rise of the Victorian Actor (London, 1978), pp. 52-54.

[30] According to Fawcett (p. 152, note 39), Thiodon first exhibited in Bristol in 1815, advertising in the Bristol Journal in April of that year. In 1821 'The Ruins of Babylon' was advertised in the Bristol Journal of 12 May, as one of a number of exhibits or performances to be given during the season.

Some further consideration will be given later to the possible influence of the theatre on Colman's major paintings. It is to be strongly lamented, however, that in this overview of the artist's Dissenting background nothing can be quoted of the views of the Reverend Thorp of Castle Green about the theatre, or about the visual arts in general. Nor is there any available testament on the subject from Colman's minister at Zion Chapel, the Reverend J.E. Good. When one comes to assess the cultural influences bearing on Colman from the people in the Congregational circle in Bristol, one is again forced to fall back on inference, working with scattered and ambiguous circumstantial evidence.

CHAPTER FOUR

The picture as propaganda: the use of the visual arts by Colman and his contemporaries as vehicles for ideas which overlap with Protestant dogma

Limitations of space absolutely forbid a lengthy discourse on the wide-ranging themes and theories which engaged the skills of Romantic subject-painters. However, as already suggested, Samuel Colman's uniqueness can only be measured by examining his work in the context of the output of other artists of his place and time. He has already been discussed as a 'Bristol School' painter. Now it is necessary to look at his art against a wider backdrop.

As in earlier pages, Colman's oil painting of St John Preaching in the Wilderness provides a suitable starting point for discussion, largely because of the pamphlet which states at least some of the artist's intentions.

'The figures are about seven hundred', claims the artist, 'which number may not be considered as overcharging the subject, when the evangelist describes them as a multitude'. Colman goes on to explain that 'the effect intended to be produced is a wild sublimity. The bursting of a cloud in a mountainous country is a frequent occurrence, of which the Painter avails himself to make St. John the more conspicuous, and which serves also to convey the idea that what he delivered was accompanied with a Divine power'.[1]

These quotations make it clear that Colman was aware of at least some of the aesthetic theory which had been developing during the eighteenth century, and several points are worth examining in some detail.

Though 'Philographicus' thought that in the seven hundred figures 'a more miserable assemblage was certainly never brought together', it is obvious that Colman was at pains to make certain that his viewers understood that he had good reasons for putting in so many figures; he was painting a history picture, with the Gospel of St Luke as his source document. In effect he was trying to follow the precepts of Reynolds by doing as Poussin had done - placing the figures central to his grand biblical subject in a setting which was also 'sublime'. He was demonstrating that, like Richard Wilson in Reynolds's generation, and like Turner and Danby in his own day, he knew that the 'history picture' was at the top of the scale on which subjects for works of art were valued, and that he, Samuel Colman, understood the formula for a painting of the highest order.

In Colman's picture the vast crowd of people who have gone into the wilderness to listen to St John's sermon is spread out across a well-lit and colourful valley. Above the mountains which enclose the valley a dark cloud gathers and breaks on the rocks above the figure of the prophet, who is almost silhouetted against the tumbling white mist - although the details of his own wild appearance can be seen - his bare feet and his 'raiment of camel's hair' as described in Matthew 3.4. It is quite likely that Colman knew that, in Discourse IV, Sir Joshua Reynolds had remarked that Poussin's attention 'was always steadily fixed on the Sublime', and that by 'sublime' Reynolds usually meant the dignified, grand human figure, stated by the Greeks or by Michelangelo. The figure of St John the Baptist, though it displays some of the 'neglects' in artistic preparation of which 'Philographicus' accuses Colman, does also have about it the air of a hero - the kind of heroic pose and gestures seen in many a representation of prophets and saints from the Renaissance onwards. Morton Paley has recognized the pose as very similar to that of Elihu in Plate 12 of Blake's Job (published in 1826, about five years after Colman painted his St John) and has suggested that both Colman and Blake may have been influenced by an engraving after Charles LeBrun of Moses and the Brazen Serpent. He has also noted that St John's arms are positioned by Colman in a similar way to St Paul's arms in Hogarth's Paul Before Felix and in Raphael's cartoon, The Blinding of Elymas (which was evidently Hogarth's source).[2] It can therefore be seen that, with these models available to him, Colman may have been constructing an image of the prophet which was sublime in a broadly classical sense.

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[1] Both Colman's pamphlet and the Bristol Mercury review by 'Philographicus' are given in full in Appendices Two and Three.

There is also the possibility that 'Philographicus' provides the clue to the immediate reference Colman found for his prophet - and for the general arrangement of the foreground figures: 'The reader may see something of a "wild sublimity" in Sal. Rosa's picture of this subject (the print of it is very common) of which Mr. Colman's is a debased recollection'. The painting by Salvator Rosa which is referred to here may well be the St John Preaching in the Wilderness which was in the collection of the Earl of Chesterfield at the time it was engraved in 1768 by John Browne for John Boydell.[3] The engraving is reproduced in Plate 14. This is not a particularly wild scene in Salvatorean terms, although the overhanging rocks are dark and menacing and the branches of the trees twisted and otherwise smitten. What is important is that the relationship of John to the various groups of nearby listeners and to the rocks and water is interestingly reflected in Colman's version of the subject. This substantiates the idea implied by the artist's own phrase, 'wild sublimity', that Colman was aware that the philosophical concept of The Sublime could embody, not only the grand, the heroic, the wonderful, but also the awe-inspiring, the frightening. The landscapes of Salvator Rosa were popular in Colman's lifetime precisely because they typically induced feelings of awe and even fear, which were regarded as pleasurable sensations when they were experienced as responses to poetry or to works of art.

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[2] Morton D. Paley, The Apocalyptic Sublime (to be published by Yale University Press, about July 1986). Since Dr Paley's book was still being prepared for publication when this thesis was submitted, page references were not available. St John Preaching is discussed in a section on Colman. I am very grateful to Dr Paley for sharing this material with me.

In the eighteenth-century debate on the vocabulary of aesthetics, it was Edmund Burke who made the strongest contribution to

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3 The print was advertised in Boydell's Alphabetical Catalogue (London, 1803). The British Museum has a copy of the print - C.63* 1949.10.8.240. In the York Art Gallery there is an oil painting (Cat. No. 434) which is one of several versions of the subject attributed to Salvator Rosa. This shows the engraver to have reversed the composition presented in the original.

the definition of the sublime as an emotion produced by 'whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible'; the words just quoted are taken from page 13 of his Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, published in 1757. The word 'sublime' came to mean objects as well as emotions, and 'whatever is in any sort terrible' could include monsters, scenes of war, man-made and natural catastrophes, and - perhaps easiest of all to call 'sublime' - scenery which looked dangerous, potentially terrible. This interpretation of 'sublime' raised landscape painting to a new and interesting level, as explained by Andrew Wilton in his 1980 essay on Turner and the Sublime:

> The vast, the remote, the obscure, qualities that give rein to the imagination, can be enumerated in respect to landscape more easily and precisely than in connection with religious, mental or abstract ideas. The greatness of a Greek hero is an abstract conception; the greatness of a mountain is very palpable. In fact, once the idea had caught on, it became much easier to talk about the sublime in terms of landscape than in the context of Aristotelian heroics. Hence, although Burke's treatise is a general philosophical discussion, the clear-cut categories into which he divided sublime experience - obscurity, privation, vastness, succession, uniformity, magnificence, loudness, suddenness and so on - came to be affixed enthusiastically to aspects of nature which were beginning to be appreciated not only by poets like Gray but by the rank and file of cultured English folk. The desire to put these ideas into words remained the first response; but that was bound, in the end, to produce paintings, since artists were, in a sense, only waiting for the literary stimulus in order to begin. 4

The growing popularity of the 'Grand Tour' of Europe in the late eighteenth century encouraged poets, novelists, painters and connoisseurs to take landscape into acount in their work. Even those who did not travel could, with the benefit of imagination and careful reading,

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4 Andrew Wilton, Turner and the Sublime (London, 1980), pp. 30-31.

bring 'sublime' scenery to bear powerfully on their own artistic production - even to the extent of influencing other artists. Mrs Radcliffe, for instance, did not experience the Alps herself, but the landscapes she described in The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) worked so potently on the minds of her readers that many of them, travelling in Europe, looked at mountains and forests and castles and gave them meaning according to the good or evil impressions of them felt by the heroine of the story, Emily St Aubert. The effect of The Mysteries of Udolpho was to add to the popularity of the paintings of Salvator Rosa and Gaspard Poussin and to encourage imitation of their style by Romantic landscapists.

All too easily the sublime could be confused with the merely sensational. John Martin's huge pictures of disasters were hailed with rapture by the public and with caustic criticism by some other contemporaries, such as Constable, who scoffed at Martin's Belshazzar's Feast, calling it a 'pantomime'.[5] He told his friend Archdeacon Fisher, in a letter[6] of 1 April 1821:

> I dined last week at Sir G[eorge] Beaumonts - met Wilkie, Jackson & Collins. It was quite amusing to hear them talk about Martins picture [again, Belshazzar's Feast]. Sir G. said some clever things about it - but he added, even allowing the composition to be something (its only merit), still if the finest composition of Handel's was played entirely out of tune what would it be. It was droll to hear Wilkie say 'Gentlemen ye are too severe' - and then say something ten times worse than had yet been said.

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[5] Letter from John Constable to John Fisher, undated, but datable to the spring of 1821. See John Constable's Correspondence: The Fishers (Vol. VI in the JCC series), (Ipswich, 1968), p. 63.

[6] John Constable's Correspondence, VI, p. 66. (The series will be referred to as JCC from now on.)

Though Martin's pictures offended the good taste of a large number of his fellow artists by seeming to be empty stage shows, vulgar 'pantomimes', it should be remembered that popular entertainments of the kind Constable and his friends despised as 'without the pale of Art' had attracted the serious attention of a number of well-respected artists.[7] Gainsborough was a friend of de Loutherbourg, and responded to the Eidophusikon by making his own show-box in which to display glass-paintings of landscapes lit dramatically from behind by candles.[8] The Eidophusikon was also the recognizable ancestor of the diorama, introduced from France in 1823, but in 1821, when Constable was pouring scorn on John Martin's painting, thousands of people who were struck by the 'sublimity' of Belshazzar's Feast were also similarly impressed by the huge 360 degree panoramas then on show in London and elsewhere, in specially constructed buildings. These panoramas would have been either the enormous static views of cities (a view of Edinburgh from Calton Hill was the subject of the very first panorama) battle-scenes, treaties, coronations, as invented and marketed by the Barker family, or moving picture-shows, achieved by means of rollers, as introduced by Peter Marshall.[9] Samuel Colman may have been privileged to see one of Marshall's shows in Bristol in 1822. Felix Farley's Bristol Journal announced on 17 August that 'Marshall's Grand Historical Peristrephic or moving Panorama' was on exhibition at the Assembly Rooms, Prince's Street. The subject was 'the Battles of Ligny, les Quatre Bras, and Waterloo' with 'the Evolutions of the Panorama accompanied by a full Military Band'.[10]

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[7] Constable to John Fisher, 30 September 1823, in reference to the diorama. See JCC, VI, p. 134.

[8] The box and ten of the transparencies are in the keeping of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

[9] For an account of the many variants on the panorama and the diorama see Scott Wilcox, 'The Panorama and Related Exhibitions in London' (unpublished M. Litt. thesis, University of Edinbrugh, 1976).

Many years before this - in 1802 - Thomas Girtin was actively involved with panorama-painting. His Eidometropolis, now known only from sketches, was a panorama of London exhibited at Spring Gardens just before Girtin's death. It was well received in critical circles as a 'connoisseur's panorama'.[11] Girtin was just one of a number of skilled artists who, like P.J. de Loutherbourg, interested themselves in 'popular' art as well as in the more élitist forms of entertainment provided by the oil paintings designed to be hung in exhibitions at the Academy and purchased by wealthy collectors. Notably, though, in less direct ways, the 'popular sublime' of the panorama, the Eidophusikon and the diorama appear to have had at least some influence on the development of the work of the very greatest artists of the early nineteenth century. Turner's preoccupation with dramatic light may have been partly due to the successes of the 'son et lumière' performances in Leicester Square and elsewhere. And even Constable may have been responding to the diorama when, in the titles he gave to his pictures, as engaved in English

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[10] FFBJ, p. 2, col. 2. This panorama continued to be advertised during August and September.

[11] The phrase comes from a review in the Monthly Magazine of October 1802, p. 255, quoted by Wilcox in Chapter Three of his dissertation.

Landscape, he paired morning and evening scenes, and drew his readers' attention to a 'Burst of Light at Noon' and 'Sunshine after a Shower'.[12]

An important corollary to the idea of the 'popular sublime' as superficial titillation of the senses of those without 'taste' is the understanding that John Martin, and others who provided the public with pictures of 'horror', were people who associated what they were doing with religious principles, whether or not they themselves held strong religious beliefs. James Ward and P.J. de Loutherbourg are known to have been associated with very extreme forms of religious 'enthusiasm'. John Martin's views were more ambiguous, from all accounts, but he told Bulwer-Lytton in 1849 that his work was controlled by a 'higher spiritual aim'.[13] Even Francis Danby, who had no confidence in organized religion, and who felt obliged to paint a grand 'catastrophe' simply to satisfy popular taste and to make his name in London by upstaging John Martin, was apologetic about his choice of subject, fully recognizing that he had no true feeling for biblical themes.[14]

Another corollary, equally important, is that Turner, who was recognized by his own generation as a genius, and whose pictures were much more statements of his philosophy of life than straightforward entertainments for the eye, was definitely a 'practitioner' of the Sublime

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[12] The titles of Lucas's engravings for English Landscape are given in John Constable's Discourses, compiled and annotated by R.B. Beckett (Ipswich, 1970), p. 11.

[13] Martin to Bulwer-Lytton, 22 May 1849. William Feaver refers to the phrase (found in the Bulwer-Lytton MSS, Knebworth House) in The Art of John Martin (Oxford, 1975), p. 205.

[14] 'I own I am not good enough to choose the subject from any religious feeling', Danby told Gibbbons in 1825. See Greenacre, p. 65 (catalogue No. 24).

- if such a term can be applied to an artist operating in a state of obligation to a theory or concept of the Sublime. If Turner was influenced by the 'popular sublime' in the Eidophusikon and other stage shows, he undoubtedly provided notable popular artists with a great fund of inspiration in his turn. Both Martin and Danby were enormously in his debt, not only for ideas for striking compositions, but also for guidance in their choice of subjects.

Turner was not a conventionally religious man. He was certainly not a churchgoer like Samuel Colman. Yet he undertook an exploration of Christian themes in his paintings, and although he overlaid the images he used with personal and perhaps deliberately obscure meaning, those images are the sun and the sea and mountains or rocks - all of which have metaphorical roles to play in the Bible. The fact that Turner, as a supreme exponent of the Burkean Sublime, adopted biblical subjects and symbols, and that in doing so he not only added to a genre already popular, but encouraged other artists to examine the same subjects, makes it very important to take into account the historical link between the Sublime and God in writings on the subject.

Coleridge referred to the Bible as 'the sublimest, and probably the oldest, book on earth'.[15] Blake also wrote of 'the Sublime of the Bible'. But the link between the Sublime and the mystery and grandeur of God goes back much further. It is implied in Joseph Addison's 'On the Pleasures of the Imagination' (published in the Spectator in the summer of 1712) and the positive treatment which Addison gave to 'the immensity and magnificence of nature' was advanced again in Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. 'Grandeur and Sublimity are terms synonymous, or nearly so', declared Blair. 'If there be any distinction between them, it arises from Sublimity's expressing Grandeur in the highest degree.' Richard Payne Knight took the positive quality of the Sublime still further when he wrote that 'all sublime feelings are . . . feelings of exultation and expansion of the mind, tending to rapture and enthusiasm'.[16] The ideas about the Sublime which have just been quoted do not take into account the dark episodes in the Bible and the angry attributes of God, but these were certainly not forgotten by Turner and other Romantic painters, nor by any means ignored in the works of literature which often inspired them. And if one searches for an acknowledgement of the awesome in the writings of the aestheticians, one can find it in Addison. 'Homer', Addison claims, 'fills his readers with sublime ideas' and 'his persons are most of them godlike and terrible'.[17] The reference to Homer is very significant, and it will be returned to a little later. For the moment, however, Addison's comments act as an assurance that Samuel Colman might have painted, in his St John Preaching, a picture 'calculated to pamper and feed the public taste', which is what 'Philographicus' considered he was doing with his 'glitter and glare', and yet have produced something which can be legitimately linked with 'sublime ideas' on a more profound level. In other words, the 'entertainment sublime' stemming from a dilution of Burke's theories could be combined in a work of art with a richer interpretation of the concept of the Sublime.

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[15] The quotation from Coleridge is from his Biographia Literaria, as cited (from the Everyman edition, p. 112) by Wilton in Turner and the Sublime, p. 12. The phrase used by Blake is quoted from his Milton (1804), Pl. 1. The Addison quotation is from the Spectator of 2 July 1712; and Blair's definition of the sublime is cited by Wilton (Turner and the Sublime, p. 12) from the 3rd edition of Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (London, 1787), p. 58.

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[16] Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste (London, 1805), p. 36.

[17] Spectator, 28 June 1712, as quoted by Wilton, p. 30.

Indeed, several of the constituents of the Sublime can be seen to come together in the passage from Colman's pamphlet which was quoted above. He claims that his intended effect is a 'wild sublimity'. This is clearly associated with the landscape in the picture, 'the bursting of a cloud in a mountainous country'. The artist says that he 'avails himself' of this phenomenon, not only 'to make St. John the more conspicuous' but 'also to convey the idea, that what he delivered was accompanied with a Divine power'.

One eighteenth-century work on the Sublime which has so far not been mentioned is Archibald Alison's Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste. This appeared in 1790 and became tremendously influential. The Scottish philosopher emphasized a necessary interplay between objects in nature and the excitement in the beholder of emotions leading to an instructive train of thought. If Samuel Colman was versed in Associationalist theory it would be only natural for him to present St John in a 'moral landscape' setting. Just how he constructed that landscape is suggested by a sentence on page six of the pamphlet: 'The Scenery is painted from Dr. Clarke's Travels in the Holy Land'.

The book referred to is almost certainly Dr Edward Clarke's Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa, a work which was published between 1810 and 1823 and which was successfully re-issued several times.[18] As they appeared the volumes were assessed in the Eclectic Review by John Foster.[19] They were also advertised widely. For instance, the Western Flying Post announced on 13 July 1812: 'To be had of Edward Upham, bookseller and music-seller, Volume the second of Dr. Clarke's Travels in Greece, Palestine and Turkey, with numerous engravings, price 4 guineas . . . sold by Edward Upham, 245 Fore-Street, Exeter'.[20]

The plates in Clarke's book are disappointing - bland re-workings by Elizabeth Byrne and others of sketches by Clarke and his companions, or versions of previously published drawings. Even when pleasing, these illustrations do not resemble Colman's picture of St John. One has to assume that the painter's claim to having been influenced by Clarke's Travels is intended to mean that he used Clarke's verbal description of the Baptist's Wilderness as the starting point for his landscape composition.

'The elevated plains upon the mountainous territory beyond the northern extremity of the lake [the Sea of Galilee] are still called by a name, in Arabic, which signifies "the Wilderness". To this wilderness it was that John, the praecursor of the Messiah, retired and also Jesus himself, in their earlier years.'[21]

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[18] There were both quarto and octavo editions published by Cadell and Davies of London. The Revd Dr Clarke (1769-1822) was an eminent Cambridge mineralogist and geographer.

[19] Foster's analyses appeared in August 1810, July and September 1816, and June 1819.

[20] p. 1, col. 6.

[21] Clarke's Travels, 'Part the Second', 4th edition, Vol. 4 (London, 1817), p. 202 (octavo edition).

A little earlier the traveller had remarked of the 'Sea of Tiberias or Sea of Galilee': 'Its eastern shores exhibit a sublime scene of mountains towards the north and south, and they seem to close it in at either extremity; both towards Chorazin, where the Jordan enters; and the Aulon, or Campus Magnus, through which the river flows to the Dead Sea.' Later, describing the view southwards from the Mount of Olives, Clarke writes of 'lofty mountains' which resemble by their position the shores of Lake Geneva, opposite to Vevay and Lausanne. 'To the north of the Lake are seen the verdant and fertile pastures of the plain of Jericho, watered by the Jordan . . . nothing appears in the surrounding country but hills, whose undulatory surfaces resemble the waves of a petrified sea'. Clarke observes too, that the barren appearance of the mountains often changed, at closer range, to a richer effect when one could see the 'little terraces . . . abundantly fertile'.[22]

Clarke's comparison of the Jordan valley with Alpine mountain scenery is predictable, since many of his readers would have made excursions to Switzerland. For Colman the remarks may have acted as permission to use a familiar image in the background of his painting. In Chapter Two the similarity between the landscape in St John Preaching and in Danby's sketch known as a Romantic Valley Scene was noted, and the suggestion made that several 'Bristol School' artists might have been influenced by looking at a particular engraving or painting. One plausible source of inspiration is Pieter Bruegel's drawing, Landscape Composition with a River (Plate 12).

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[22] For the quotations on this page see Clarke, pp. 200 and 362.

Bruegel's drawing, which dates from 1553, was bequeathed to the British Museum by Richard Payne Knight whose Analytical Inquiry has been mentioned above, for its contribution to the definition of the Sublime. Payne Knight was a versatile scholar, connoisseur and politician, and collected bronzes, besides the 273 drawings by Claude which he gave to the British Museum along with other works of art when he died in 1824. According to the Dictionary of National Biography he was a hospitable man, and his London house in Soho Square included a large room which was used as a museum. It is therefore not impossible that Samuel Colman may have been able to see Bruegel's Landscape Composition with a River while it was still in private hands.

However, there would have been many possible sources of inspiration containing the same ubiquitous rocky outcrop. Patinir is said to have formulated the shape, and it can be recognized in paintings by Quentin Massys, Adriaen Isenbrandt and Joos van Cleeve. In the Louvre there is a drawing by Bruegel which is even closer to Colman's painting in its description of the scenery than the drawing in the British Museum. In addition the same scene, reversed, forms one of the Twelve Large Landscapes after Bruegel, engraved and published between 1553 and 1557 by Jerome Cock of Antwerp.[23] There is even an example of a sixteenth century St John Preaching in the Wilderness which uses this stock backdrop. It is a painting (now in the L.V. Randall collection in Montreal) by the Master of Half-Lengths. This is an interesting precedent for Colman's choice of setting for his version of the subject. It must be emphasized, however, that this Netherlandish picture is not at all likely to have been known to Colman, who seems to have arrived at the association between the Alps and the Galilean mountains through his reading of Clarke and to have turned from the book to those visual images (including Bruegel and Salvator Rosa) which were available to him and which seemed dramatic enough to provide him with a 'wild sublimity'.

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[23] For the drawing in the Louvre, see Plate 13. The engraving is reproduced as Plate 9 in Jacques Lavalleye, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Lucas van Leyden (London, 1967).

Curiously, the same configuration of rocks appears to have been adopted by Joseph Anton Koch in a wildly sublime painting known as Macbeth and the Witches (1834) - a picture which Robert Hughes labelled 'a full-blown response to Goethe's Sturm und Drang'.[24] This, of course, was painted about thirteen years after Colman's St John Preaching. However, about 1810, eleven years or so before Colman used the 'Bruegelian' motif, Turner painted a watercolour of The Upper Fall of the Reichenbach: rainbow (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection). As Plate 15 shows, this little picture is very grand in conception. The picture space is filled by the rocks, tilting over the rainbow which protects the tiny figures below from the threatening mountain and the tumbling waterfall. The scene is a famous tourist attraction in the Bernese Oberland, which Turner had visited and sketched in 1802. Samuel Colman may have visited it himself, and it may have reminded him of the sixteenth-century Alpine views which have just been discussed. There is no record of his having been in Switzerland or of his having seen Turner's watercolour. Nevertheless it is interesting that Turner's view emphasizes a wonderfully forceful rainbow, which is of course an

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24 'Vision Group from the Backwater', Time (7 December 1970). The painting is in the Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal. See Plate 18.

image from nature suggestive of God's promises to mankind. Colman's equivalent of the rainbow is St John, with his message of promise, standing where the rainbow begins in Turner's picture - at the foot of the cascade of mist which the artist makes it clear he is using to symbolize 'a Divine power'.

The American artist, Thomas Cole, also painted a landscape, with St John preaching in the wilderness.[25] Cole (1801-1848) was Lancashire born, but emigrated with his parents to the United States in his late teens and developed there as a landscapist of some repute. His John the Baptist was painted in 1827, two years before his important return visit to England, so there can have been no opportunity for Cole to meet Colman. It is therefore instructive to see that Cole's interpretation of the subject is remarkably similar, in some ways, to Colman's. It is also interesting to note that Thomas Cole had a Dissenting background, and was throughout his life extremely conscious of the moral and spiritual dimension in his work. Towards the end of his career he joined the Episcopalian church.

As a painter and as a poet, Cole was repeatedly at pains to convey to his public his ideas about God, man and America. It will be seen from the reproduction (Plate 17) that his St John preaches in a wilderness which is not Alpine or Galilean, but the untamed American landscape (with the addition of a few palms). The prominent rock in the middle distance may be the 'Solitary Rock near New Haven' which

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25 John the Baptist, Preaching in the Wilderness, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

appears as a sketch in Cole's notebook of 1829.[26] Similar striking formations appear to have been noticed by the young artist in various parts of New York state and New England as he made sketches while on walking tours. A dramatic rock entitled 'The Jumping Off Place' appears in the same sketchbook and must have been the basis of Cole's much later oil painting, Angels on the Mountain (1846-47) in which the birds shown in the drawing have become minute angels wheeling around the cap of the crag.

On the other hand, Colman attempts in his St John Preaching a kind of authenticity that is not spoiled by a conflicitng determination to paint both the Holy Land and his homeland. His palm trees are very small and fit reasonably well into the busy scene, the Alpine landscape which Clarke has identified with the Land of Israel. The costumes of the 'multitude' are acceptably biblical too. What is noteworthy is that Colman's St John stands on a rock shaped and positioned with curious similarity to that on which Cole's Baptist is positioned; and both pictures show dramatic swirls of mist - variants on the idea of the 'pillar of cloud' - which imply that supernatural dynamics are in operation within the scene.

Like Colman, Cole may well have been influenced by the engraving of Salvator Rosa's St John Preaching. Both the rocky platform used by the Baptist, and the stance taken by the prophet suggest a likelihood that this was so. The swirl of mist is not found in Salvator Rosa and Cole would have had even fewer opportunities of seeing

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[26] New York State Library (Albany, NY), Thomas Cole Papers, Box 6, Folder 2.

Turner's work than would Colman. However, the supernatural suggestions made by clouds and trails of mist were more accessible in engravings after landscapes by Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg - himself under the influence of Salvator Rosa. In the early 1820s Sir John Fleming Leicester owned a painting by de Loutherbourg called An Avalanche in the Alps in the Valley of Lauterbrunnen. There was an engraving of the painting by John Young which Colman may have seen, and which could also have influenced Thomas Cole.[27] Much later in his life Cole made a list of his books (now part of the Cole archives in the New York State Library). From this it is known that he owned books on aesthetic theory by Blair and by Archibald Alison. So it is quite possible that Cole would have been instructed by Alison, as early as 1827, that 'the Material Universe around us becomes a Scene of moral discipline'.[28] And 'moral discipline' is, of course, the message of the third chapter of St Luke. Cole preaches to the people of America, with whose destiny he was passionately concerned, while Colman speaks, as will be seen shortly, to particular issues.

When 'Philographicus' read in Colman's leaflet that the painter had organized his colour scheme for St John Preaching to suit what he called 'the luxuriant language of Prophecy' found in St Luke's Gospel, that confident critic thought the artist's reasoning 'too far fetched and

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27 This landscape was sold in 1827 at Christie's, to Lord de Tabley. Another possible reason for the swirling mist in both Cole's painting and in Colman's is that each artist had read The Mysteries of Udolpho. Ronald Paulson has suggested that Cole may have filled gaps in his 'reading' of pictures with experiences of the mountain landscape as imagined by Mrs Radcliffe. For this speculation see Paulson's Literary Landscape: Turner and Constable (New Haven and London, 1982), p. 15.

28 Alison, II, 440.

too silly to require a comment'. Actually Colman's description of the language of the Bible is very telling - not only as a little piece of literary criticism in its own right, but as a comment on the painter's awareness of the Bible as a great work of literature.

During the eighteenth century the Bible had been 'discovered' as a source of poetic language and of subjects for poets and painters. It has already been mentioned that Addison, when analysing Homer, made an important connection between the godlike and the 'terrible' or sublime. It has also been shown that the Sublime, in its purest form, grandest manifestation, was recognized by philosophers and writers and painters as being an attribute of God. From this idea came the association with God of natural phenomena which were mysterious and grand, exciting, surprising in their magnificence or size or darkness or light. It should also be noticed - now that Samuel Colman's sensitivity to the vocabulary of the Bible has been pinpointed - that a shift occurred in the use of language in the eighteenth century, reflecting a general appreciation of the 'luxuriant language of prophecy', and that, at the same time, it became fashionable to celebrate the Bible prophets as heroes along with Homer and Milton and Shakespeare and the newly 'discovered' Ossian. In this context Samuel Colman's John the Baptist is a bard, though he is not proclaiming ruin to a ruthless king, but 'preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' to a 'multitude' of listeners.

This change - away from a standard reference by writers and artists to classical literature for subjects, allusions and for words themselves - meant that by the late eighteenth century the Bible was being used as a vital source of 'sublime' subject-matter and that biblical allusions or symbols were to be found as commonly in Romantic writing and (to a lesser degree) in painting as references to Greek mythology had been a century previously.

To some extent this change was due to biblical scholarship. The most notable example was Bishop Robert Lowth's Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews. Originally published in Latin, this book was issued in an English translation in 1787; the title speaks for itself about the author's position in regard to the study of the Bible. Lowth also published, in 1778, Isaiah: A New Translation, with a Preliminary Dissertation, and Notes Critical, Philological, and Explanatory. In the 'Preliminary Dissertation' he drew attention to the close relationship between the language of the 'Books supposed to be Metrical' and the 'Prophetical Style' - that is, between the Psalms and the Song of Solomon, and writings by prophets, notably Isaiah. Lowth's ideas, it is thought, prompted a number of poets to look to the Bible - to the Authorized Version as well as to Lowth's translation of Isaiah - for stylistic models. Morton Paley believes, for example, that Blake may have followed Lowth's lead when he built up various parallel structures in his composition of Jerusalem. Also Leslie Tannenbaum has suggested that Lowth's influence is likely to have been at work in Blake when he wrote his early books of 'prophecy'.[29]

The so-called 'primitive' imagery and the simplicity of language structure discovered by the critics also appealed to Wordsworth, although it would be misleading to suggest that it was only through instruction by

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[29] Morton D. Paley, The Continuing City: William Blake's 'Jerusalem' (Oxford, 1983), pp. 44-47; and Leslie Tannenbaum, Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art (Princeton, 1982), pp. 26-28.

Lowth and other scholars that Romantic poets found assistance in shaping rhythm and choosing vocabulary. The hymns of Isaac Watts (which influenced Blake) had an enormous impact on poets; and to name Watts is to point out just one of many people who used the Bible (albeit unpretentiously) as a source of ideas for their own writing during the eighteenth century.

Murray Roston drew attention a number of years ago to the influence of the Bible on the pastoral poetry of the Romantic era.[30] This must certainly help to account for the continuing popularity of James Thomson's Seasons both with readers and with painters. Colman's Thomson-inspired 'psalm' will be discussed in Section C. Another fascinating connection between the Bible and the arts which built up during the eighteenth century was also pointed out by Roston: the patriotism - of an expanding empire first, perhaps, and later the nationalism felt by an island people at war with Revolutionary France - was an emotion in sympathy with the mood of David the Psalmist and with the accounts of the fluctuating fortunes of the Children of Israel. Händel's Messiah (first performed in 1742) enjoyed enormous successes up and down the country during Samuel Colman's lifetime. In Handel's own day the work was slow to achieve popularity, but after the Händel Commemoration of 1784 (which enthusiasts wrongly supposed to mark the centenary of his birth, anticipating the anniversary by one year) the composer became a cult

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30 Prophet and Poet: The Bible and the Growth of Romanticism (London, 1965), p. 92. I am indebted to Dr Gordon Strachan for introducing me to this important book. Roston's discussion of the adoption of the Old Testament as a source of patriotic (and sublime) metaphors is found on pages 88 and 89 of his book.

figure and the Messiah was celebrated, not only for its intrinsic merits, but for its manifestation of 'sublimely prophetic' themes in a splendid combination of Händel's music and the words of the Authorized Version of the Bible, carefully selected and arranged by Charles Jennens. Another Handel oratorio - one other among the many Bible subjects he set to music - was also a favourite attraction at 'sacred concerts' in many places. This was Israel in Egypt (1739) which appears to have caught the imagination of a wide public who, for varying reasons, saw themselves as part of a spiritual Israel. The theme, as we shall see, had particular appeal for Dissenters.

No one hearing the Hallelujah Chorus (well performed) can fail to appreciate how much more convincing the words sound when given the added dimension of the melody and the rhythm worked out for them by Händel. It becomes quite easy to suspend one's disbelief for a few minutes and to hear the choir as 'a great voice of much people in heaven' giving tongue to the message of Revelation 19.6: 'Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth'. In a similar way, the 'fire mingled with the hail' of which the chorus cries out in Israel in Egypt carries a 'wild sublimity' which has a lot to do with performance, occasion, as well as with verbal selection and arrangement. This reinforces one's awareness that the spoken word - the poem recited by the minstrel, the sermon given from the pulpit - have an impact that is quite different from the impression left by the written or printed page. They are part of a drama, a 'show'. In a sense they follow the rule prescribed by Horace, in Ars Poetica, which said that poetry should imitate painting: Ut pictura poesis.

Horace articulated the idea of the 'sister arts' in the late first century B.C. However, the concept is likely to have roots which go back much further, and so it is not surprising to find the principle at work in non-classical centuries and geographical areas. Gothic illuminated manuscripts demonstrate the idea. So do seventeenth-century masques. So do some buildings, which set a stage for the real-life activites of those using them. In the eighteenth century, gardens were very delibertely laid out in a picturesque manner; and, also in the eighteenth century, James Thomson's Seasons, and other poems were written with paintings of nature as models, as well as the 'sublime' vocabulary of the Bible. On the other hand, it is clear that by the eighteenth century Ut pictura poesis was a formula which was commonly, perhaps usually, seen reversed, with pictures now imitating poems. From the Bible to Shakespeare, from Homer to Ossian, from Thomson to Gray, great works of literature were acknowledged by painters as right and proper subject-matter for visual imitation or illustration. Since John Runciman and Benjamin West (to name just two artists) painted King Lear in the Storm, it is not particularly surprising to find that Samuel Colman also tackled the subject (Plate 5). Colman's Death of Amelia (Pl. 3) closely imitates Richard Wilson's Celadon and Amelia (Pl. 4) painted forty years earlier, in response to an episode in Thomson's Summer (lines 1169-1222). The picture of Tintern Abbey which Colman is thought to have painted in the 1820s (Pl. 22) again demonstrates the artist trying his hand at a fashionable subject which had been made fashionable because poets had become interested in ruins as 'sublime' (and, of course visual) subject-matter. Wordworth, for instance, had written, in 1798, 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey'.

Again, Blake and Martin were among artist contemporaries of Samuel Colman who were inspired by Milton's Paradise Lost; as will become clear later, Colman was certainly also under the spell of that great poem. Of course, the Bible was, as it had been for Milton, the richest literary source of all - for Benjamin West, P.J. de Loutherbourg, for Turner, Martin, Danby, for William Blake, and for Samuel Colman - all choosing from a familiar stock of themes, and all reacting to them in personal ways.

References to the familiar use of literature by artists in the Romantic period help to place Samuel Colman rather comfortably among his fellow painters - in regard to his choice of subjects, and to some extent the modern viewer's ability to 'read' a Bible-inspired picture by Colman is aided if he or she is aware of the Ut pictura poesis dictum, as it was interpreted and expressed by the best-known of the eighteenth-century writers on aesthetics. In other words, the viewer is given access by these definitions to an understanding of various visual clues to verbal meaning in the picture. As a very obvious example, the gash in the root of the tree, in St John Preaching, just below the prophet's feet, is a clear pointer to Luke 3.9: 'And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees'. This is a quotation which would be quite easy to recognize, even if the artist had not drawn attention to it in his pamphlet.

What the familiar theory, used in this way, can not do is to provide the viewer with a key to visual signals in the painting which are not directly related to a text, but which are part of a traditional system of 'hidden' symbolism. Like Blake, Colman appears to have been well-versed in an 'emblem tradition'. To ignore the tradition is to put up a barrier to some of the most interesting messages which the artist is attempting to convey.

Available to Colman, as to Blake, would have been what Leslie Tannenbaum calls 'a constellation of ideas about the pictorial nature of prophetic language'.[31] These were presented in the works of Bishop Lowth (already mentioned) and in books by a number of other respected biblical scholars. Charles Daubuz's Perpetual Commentary on the Revelation of St John (1720) associated the symbolism to be found in Bible prophecies with Egyptian hieroglyphics. Daubuz's theories influenced those of William Warburton, whose Divine Legation of Moses was published in 1738. Warburton traced the development of the visual in language from picture-writing itself through fables and similes, to metaphors and adjectives, noting that the prophets employed all these forms and that prophetic style is a 'speaking hieroglyph'. Warburton's theories were restated in Richard Hurd's book, An Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies (1772), but Warburton's own work continued to be read; there was a tenth edition published in London in 1846.

Another interesting contributor to the literature on the visual characteristics of the prophetic writings was William Jones, with A Course of Lectures on the Figurative Language of Scripture, first published in 1786. Jones believed that visual symbolism could be traced back to the Garden of Eden and that the Bible contained the patterns for

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31 Tannenbaum, p. 60. For Blake's own borrowing from and making of emblems, see Jean Hagstrum, William Blake: Poet and Painter: An Introduction to the Illuminated Verse (Chicago, 1964), Chapter 4.

all symbols, including pagan symbols.[32]

'From these ideas', suggests Tannenbaum, 'Blake would have discovered either the impetus or the theoretical sanction for his decision to cast his prophecies into a form that combines both words and pictures'. It also seems likely that Colman would have had some sort of experience of this way of approaching the Bible and that these eighteenth-century theorists would have helped to validate the use of popular emblems by Colman in his paintings. Daubuz, as Tannenbaum earlier explains (p. 58), compared the Book of Revelation to an emblem book.

Emblem books had been popular in England since the seventeenth century. Ironically, many of those books which were adopted into the English Protestant folk tradition of religious writing and reading were largely the work of Roman Catholics.[33] However, Bunyan himself provided posterity with a delightful emblem book, A Book for Boys and Girls, originally published in London in 1686. Bunyan's emblems, like those of Francis Quarles (1635) and Geoffrey Whitney (1586), were reissued frequently and were still in currency in the early nineteenth century.

Typical of the emblem book (which was a collection of moral metaphors in words and related pictures) was an insistence that things are not always what they seem to be, and the emblem points up the contrast between good and evil by exposing the sinister reality of something which looks innocent on the face of things. Bunyan tells us, in 'Upon the Frog', for instance, that the frog-like hypocrite 'seeks in Churches for to croak' but 'neither loveth Jesus nor his Yoak'.[34]

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[32] Again see Tannenbaum, p. 60. The quotation which follows is from p. 61.

[33] See Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books (London, 1948).

Evidence of Colman's use of the same kind of emblem is provided by the presence in St James's Fair of a beehive near the door of the building on the right - the house which is evidently a brothel. For Bunyan, as for Quarles and the other emblematists, the bee is a symbol of worldliness and of temptation. Its 'sweet unto a many death has been' is how Bunyan expresses it in 'Upon the Bee'.

Colman's interest in emblems and in other similar kinds of visual symbols will be examined in more detail in later chapters. It may be noted here, however, that Blake and Colman were certainly not alone in making popular tradition fit their own purposes in this respect. Turner developed a very personal range of symbols and visual puns. And all these Romantic painters had the powerful example of Hogarth's visual allegories to encourage them.

Another form of symbolism used by Colman, and by William Blake and John Martin, and before them by Benjamin West, was typological symbolism. Although Lowth did not use the phrase, 'typological symbolism', this was what he was describing when he wrote about a 'sublimer kind of allegory'.[35] Blake applied the words 'Sublime Allegory' to his art and he made the source of his symbolism explicit in the inscriptions which form part of his engraving after the famous sculptured group, Laocoön and his Sons. 'The Old and New Testaments', claims Blake, 'are the Great Code of Art'. The Code allows Blake to see Laocoön as Jehovah, and his sons as Satan and Adam - both 'types' or prefigurations of Christ, as Blake views them. The engraving of 'Laocoön' was carried out about 1820.[36] However, a number of years before then, Blake made his interpretation of the 'Great Code of Art' very clear, when in his Descriptive Catalogue (1809) he wrote 'Antiquity preaches the Gospel of Jesus'.[37] Blake subscribed to the view held by a number of exegetes - many of them much more radical in their thinking than William Jones (mentioned above) - that the Bible was the inspiration of all mythologies. He even held that Greek and Roman sculpture - the Laocoön group, for instance - was simply imitating originals found in ancient Israel. The figures of Laocoön and his sons were 'copied from the Cherubim of Solomons Temple', according to the inscription at the foot of the engraving.

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[34] A Book for Boys and Girls, Emblem XXXVI.

[35] Lowth, Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, I, 203 (of the translation by G. Gregory, second edition, published in London in 1816). Blake's reference to 'sublime allegory' was made in a letter to Thomas Butts, dated 6 July 1803, and included in The Letters of William Blake, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 69.

There is no evidence to suggest that Samuel Colman shared Blake's extreme views about the origins of art. Nevertheless he does appear to have made use of typological symbolism in more conventional ways - as indeed Blake did too.

Strictly applied, biblical typology involves recognizing various Old Testament characters and situations as prefigurations of Christ, or

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36 There is a reproduction of the copy in the Rosenbloom collection on p. 145 of Martin Butlin, William Blake (exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London, 1978).

37 There is a fuller quotation in Tannenbaum, p. 86, at the start of a chapter which examines in detail the range of eighteenth-century writing on scriptural 'types'.

'types' of events in his life on earth. Blake made this kind of connection between Samson and Christ, both verbally in 'Samson' (Prophetical Sketches) and visually in the pair of watercolours of Samson Breaking his Bonds and Samson Subdued which he sold to Thomas Butts in 1805.[38] In the one, Samson bursts from the ropes which bind him, drapery falling away from him like the shroud of the risen Christ; in the other Delilah, who is a type of Judas, presides over the shorn body of Samson. The relationship of the figures is something like a pietà, turned around in a sinister way, for Delilah looks out towards the soldiers, not downwards at the figure leaning on her, and Samson's body faces away from the viewer, rather than being open to the onlooker, as is the innocent ('lamb of God') body of Jesus. An even clearer example of Blake's use of typology is another watercolour, datable to about 1805, The Finding of Moses: The Compassion of Pharaoh's Daughter.[39] The baby Moses is seen reaching out eagerly to his discoverers from his cradle in the bulrushes. On the right, in the foreground, a pelican feeds her young with blood from her breast. Since the pelican is a traditional emblem of Christ's atoning sacrifice, its appearance in the picture is a reminder to the viewer that Moses is a type of Christ. As leader of the Israelites, he saved them from the evil world of Pharaoh's Egypt, and even when he was merely an infant, he was hidden away in Egypt, as the child Christ was, to protect him from his enemies.

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[38] These are reproduced in Butlin, p. 89 (Figures 166 and 167). The originals are in the Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York (166) and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (167).

[39] This watercolour is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is reproduced as Figure 161 in Butlin (p. 86).

In Samuel Colman's painting of Belshazzar's Feast (Pl. 53) typological symbolism is used in conjunction with other kinds of symbolism - which will be examined in some detail in later pages. The most outstanding 'type' in the category of prefigurative images of Christ, is the young warrior with upraised sword, on the right of the central banqueting table. This man, standing with his foot on the neck of an evil Babylonian courtier, is lit boldly and dressed in a white tunic. It could hardly be clearer that he is intended to symbolize the 'seed' of the woman, foretold in Genesis 3.15 as one who would bruise the head of the serpent, Satan. His place in the story of the fall of Babylon is taken, typologically, by Cyrus the Persian, whose part in the drama of the 'Captivity' (he is thought to have been the nephew, and son-in-law of Darius, who is referred to in Daniel 5.31 as the conqueror of Belshazzar) is made clearer by reference to Ezra, Chapter One and to Isaiah 45.1-6, as well as to later chapters in the Book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel himself, who also appears in the scene, is also a type of Christ, foreshadowing his steadfastness in the face of temptation, and his wisdom. The Cyrus figure is the more interesting, however, since it does not appear in John Martin's version of Belshazzar's Feast, whereas Colman seems to be emphasizing it. If Colman had access to a Bible commentary - one of those mentioned earlier in this chapter, perhaps - he would certainly have had full confirmation of the typological significance of Cyrus. Scott's commentary[40] on Isaiah 45.1-6, emphasizes that Cyrus 'was anointed of God, as he was set apart for this work and was in some respects a type of Christ the Redeemer'. And the Revd Thomas Haweis agrees: 'Cyrus was the type of the Great Redeemer, and in his deliverance of the captive Jews, prefigured the greater redemption which Jesus should obtain for his people of all nations'.[41]

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[40] The edition of Thomas Scott's Commentary on the Holy Bible which has been used is the 6th edition, published in 6 volumes in London, in 1823.

The Bible itself supports this kind of typological exegesis. In Matthew 12.40, for example, Jesus told the Pharisees that, like Jonah, who spent three days and nights in the belly of the whale, he, the Son of man, would spend three days and nights in 'the heart of the earth'. Another notable New Testament text, inviting regular typological study of the Old Testament, is John 3.14: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up'. In a tiny detail in The Coming of the Messiah (Pl. 79) Colman refers to this 'shadow' of Christ.

This straightforward application of an Old Testament person or episode to Christ and his life was just one way in which Bible scholars, and poets and painters, made use of the concept of typology. Tannenbaum notes that 'in Blake's time the word "type" was used very loosely, often interchangeably with "prophecy", "emblem", "symbol", "hieroglyph", "allegory", and "figure"', and he points out that 'typology also has its eschatological applications, whereby some exegetes perceived the New Testament as only a partial fulfillment of Old Testament types and expected the ultimate fulfillment to take place at the apocalypse'.[42] In other words, events and people in centuries long after Bible times would be related typologically to those earlier types of Christ, or to Christ himself. And by extension of the analogical process, modern individuals and events could be seen as post-figurations of Bible characters who were not types of Christ, but simply part of the drama of the Bible, or perhaps opposites of Christ, actually or symbolically his enemies. One literary example of this loosely conceived typological situation is Thomas Paine's parallel between King George and Pharaoh in Common Sense.[43]

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[41] The Evangelical Expositor, or a Commentary on the Holy Bible, 2 vols (Glasgow, 1819). Both Haweis and Scott were Church of England clergymen.

The same kind of applicaton of biblical events and individuals to topical concerns had been made by seventeenth-century Puritans, and the habit continued. It was a favourite game during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, when Napoleon was seen as Antichrist and England as modern Israel. In a sense, Blake was playing this game when he created his great picture-poem, Jerusalem, which is certainly a piece of political propaganda, though Blake's approach to politics, as to typology, was by no means orthodox. Samuel Colman, too, appears to have adapted typology to his own political uses, in Belshazzar's Feast. The fascinating hints which he presents in the picture will be examined in Chapter Six.

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[42] Tannenbaum, pp. 88 and 89.

[43] I am also indebted to Tannenbaum (p. 95) for this reference to Paine. He cites p. 25 of Common Sense, in The Selected Works of Tom Paine and Citizen Tom Paine, edited by Howard Fast (New York, 1943).

This chapter has been a survey, to this point, of the influences at work on artists, in Samuel Colman's lifetime and just before it, of concepts which brought together aesthetic theory and the appreciation of the Bible. The rest of the chapter will concentrate on two important phenomena in the history of the art of this period. One of these is the series of attempts by artists and churchmen and individual patrons from the mid-eighteenth century onwards to organize the visual expression of the Bible and to promote the use of the Bible as a 'sublime' text for public art and a programme for an English school of art. The second, less easily documented, but none the less palpable feature of the period was the pessimism which settled over England during the Revolutionary Wars and which had a wide-spread influence on artists' interest in and uses of the theories of the Sublime. There will be room here to do very little more than mention these subjects; but their mention will help to explain viewpoints taken in later chapters.

During the eighteenth century illustrated Bibles were available to the reading public in England. But, for the average person these engravings formed the largest scale of religious works of art, or at least, of post-Reformation art. Churches built as Protestant places of worship were quite bare of ornament, by medieval or by twentieth century standards. For people nowadays who are members of strict Protestant denominations, it is not hard to visualize the situation; but for mostly everyone else it is difficult to realize that religious art of a more ambitious nature than the engraved Bible or emblem book was alarming, not just to Quakers and Presbyterians, but to most Protestants, including most Anglicans. Monumental sculpture, and oil paintings, to be used as altar-pieces or other prominent decorations in churches, were considered 'popish' or 'romish'. It is important to remember that while Bible scholarship and aesthetic thinking were encouraging artists to take events and themes from the Old and New Testaments as the subjects of their work, these influences were proceeding from a tiny minority of the populace. Even within that minority (the clergy, the university academics) by no means everyone thought art should be put into the churches. It was one thing to admire a picture of Christ, or of St John preaching in the wilderness on the walls of a mansion, or at an exhibition, but quite another matter to allow such a picture to become an 'image' in a church. Yet there was also a consciousness in the eighteenth century that the limitations of private patronage were such that a development of a national style of history painting could not take place in England unless the Church changed its attitude to the decoration of places of public worship.

In 1761 the publication took place in London of a book called The Ornaments of Churches Considered, with a particular view to the late decoration of the parish church of St. Margaret Westminster. This was written by Dr W. Hole, and published by Dr Thomas Wilson, then the rector of St Stephen, Walbrook. The 'decoration' mentioned in the book's title refers particularly to the controversial stained glass window which had been given to the church and put in place in the east window. It centred on a crucifixion scene, which so annoyed a number of people who thought that they ought to have been consulted, that a lawsuit was brought against the churchwardens in 1758. The book formed the defence of the introduction of the window, and left behind what John Dillenberger calls 'a far-reaching document on the question of images in the churches'.[44] Wilson, in his introduction, argued for the beneficial value of church decoration which would enhance 'one's ideas of his majesty and power'. And he put forward the idea that historical scenes with many figures in them were preferable to single-figure compositions, since they would not encourage the worship of one character, such as Christ, in the form of an idol.

This episode did not settle the controversy, however. The Church was still divided in its views about 'images'. In 1773 an ambitious scheme was proposed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, on behalf of a number of members of the Royal Academy who were willing to carry out the decoration of St Paul's Cathedral, free of charge. These academicians included Sir Joshua himself, and Benjamin West, as well as Angelica Kauffman, James Barry and others. Thomas Newton, Dean of St Paul's at the time, was a keen supporter of the plan, believing that painting 'never grew up to maturity and perfection, unless it could be introduced into churches as in foreign countries'.[45] This view was shared by Reynolds and Barry. And as late as 1825 it was aired once again by William Carey in a work entitled The National Obstacle to the National Public Style Considered. Observations on the Probable Decline or Extinction of British Historical Painting, from the Effects of the Church Exclusion of Paintings. Whether or not Newton's claim was true, it was not tested at St Paul's in 1773, in spite of the support given to Newton and the artists by King George III; the Trustees of the cathedral feared a 'popish plot', it seems (or perhaps they simply anticipated a public outcry against 'idols'). The grand plan came to nothing.

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[44] Benjamin West: The Context of his Life's Work, with Particular Attention to Paintings with Religious Subject Matter (San Antonio, Texas, 1977), p. 39. The account of the Church-art debate, in this chapter, is based on information found in Dillenberger's book.

[45] The Works of the Right Reverend Thomas Newton, D.D., 3 vols (London, 1782), I, 106.

Other commissions did materialize, however, including work for Benjamin West, whose experience in handling Bible subjects now began to lead him towards a dramatic, 'sublime' style of composition. About 1780 West was appointed by the king to design and paint the decoration of a new royal chapel at Windsor. The subject was 'The History of Revealed Religion' and the designs brought into 'focus' (so to speak) the theology of Bishop Warburton (who has already been mentioned as the author of an influential treatise) and of Warburton's colleague and pupil, Richard Hurd, as well as the ideas about the pattern of history which were held by Thomas Newton. It is well known that West's biographer, John Galt, later recalled that George III had 'desired Mr. West to draw up a list of subjects from the Bible, susceptible of pictorial representation, which Christians, of all denominations, might contemplate without offense to their tenets'.[46] However, the elaborate scheme of the chapel appears to have been an academic exercise outside the scope of the learning of either West or the king. As with the St Paul's project, the scheme for the chapel was doomed to come to naught - as a whole work of art, that is. It differed from the 1773 plan in that West was paid by the king for about thirty years following 1780, and completed most of the pictures intended to form elements in the design. Though the chapel was never finished and the pictures never assembled there, the artist was able to show his paintings at the Academy and elsewhere, and they established him as the foremost exponent in his generation, of the 'religious sublime'.

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[46] The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq., 2 vols (London, 1820), II, 53.

By the time Colman is likely to have been in a position to see West's work at first hand, the grandiose figure compositions were beginning to be considered unfashionable by critics. Hazlitt gave the final version of West's Death on the Pale Horse a 'bad press' in 1817 when it was shown to the public. On the other hand, the public were very much impressed by the huge picture - which was explained to them in two publications by John Galt and by William Carey, who each wrote 'descriptions' intended for sale at the time of exhibition. With these 'tracts', says Allen Staley, West's painting 'constituted a visual sermon and was exhibited and received as such'.[47] Later on, he adds, when the picture went on tour, it 'was seen by enormous crowds for whom religious content, rather than aesthetic quality, was all-important'. It is interesting to note that Hazlitt saw in West's picture, not only the 'bad colouring and stiff inanimate drawing of Poussin' but also a quotation from Hogarth's Gin Lane.[48] This kind of borrowing (the figures of a mother and her young child reminded Hazlitt of those of the drunken woman whose child slips from her arms in Hogarth's print) would certainly place West, like Blake, and like Hogarth, in the tradition of those whose Puritan inheritance manifested itself in the 'emblem habit'.

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[47] 'West's "Death on the Pale Horse"', Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts, 58 (1980), 137-149 (pp. 145 and 147).

[48] See Staley, p. 149, note 27 for full details. He cites, in reference to Hazlitt's criticisms, pp. 322-323 of the 1903 London edition of The Collected Works of William Hazlitt.

And if the President of the Royal Academy borrowed from Hogarth, Samuel Colman was in rather exalted company when he too looked to Hogarth for 'vocabulary' in the 1820s.

If West's grand design for the Chapel of Revealed Religion had been completed, the picture-gallery which it would have produced would have been accessible to a very limited number of people. Engravings of the major paintings would, of course, have given the general public some idea of their composition, but the impact of the sheer size of the paintings on the walls would not have been felt by more than a few privileged individuals. It must be granted that if the chapel had been finished, the precedent set would have meant commissions for more church decoration. On the other hand, it seems fair to suggest that schemes for the encouragement of English artists (working with biblical themes) which were associated from the outset with print-making projects or with the publication of illustrated Bibles should be credited with very real and wide-spread importance, especially if they actually resulted in the completion of the project.

The most notable attempt by a publisher to establish a School of History Painting in Britain through the commissioning of Bible illustrations was Thomas Macklin. His project began in 1789 and was finished in 1800. It thus ran side by side for some years with Alderman John Boydell's more famous scheme of patronage, involving the publication of an illustrated Shakespeare. Like Boydell (whose enterprise began in 1786) Macklin employed a number of well-known artists and engravers. The Bible eventually included engravings of works by Reynolds, West, Fuseli, Stothard, Hamilton and others. Above all, however, Macklin encouraged the development of the 'religious sublime' in

Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, whose dramatic perception of the events described in the Bible was in this way shared with large numbers of viewers who might not otherwise have experienced works of art. Undoubtedly the accessibility of Bibles like Macklin's (published in 1800 in seven folio volumes) and of the various others containing high-quality engravings which were produced in the early nineteenth century gave provincial artists like Colman opportunities to see religious art (including religious art by their contemporaries) integrated with the Scriptures in a handsome manner. Such Bibles may have inspired commissions and encouraged ambitious paintings.

It must be emphasized that the interest shown, both by the general public and by theologians, in the illustration of the Bible, can be related, all through the 'Romatic Period' to a wish to express and a need to accept the events described in the Bible as historical fact. In effect the completion of a Chapel of Revealed Religion at Windsor would have set the seal of royal approval on the Bible at a time when it was under threat (as it continued to be) from rationalist theories. (Later opposition was headed by scientific discoveries, particularly those in the area of geology.) Finding order and purpose in the books of the Bible was not simply an academic exercise enjoyed by men like Warburton and Hurd; understanding the typological relationship of Moses to Christ, being able to see in the ceremonies and regulations given to the Jews wandering in the Wilderness 'shadows' of what was to come later in the life of Christ and in history not yet accomplished made sense for ordinary people of what would otherwise have seemed boring and irrelevant. In this context it is interesting to note that there were proposals made by such very different people as the painter, James Barry, and the entrepreneur John

Boydell, to carry out schemes involving the visual presentation of the Bible as history. Barry sketched out a very tentative 'Progress of Theology', and Boydell at one time intended to publish a huge work called 'The History of the World Exemplified' which would have begun with an illustrated Old Testament.[49] Neither of these schemes appears to have reached beyond a conceptual stage.

In the generation which followed that of Boydell and Barry attempts to support the historical reality of the Bible could sometimes involve artists in elaborate explanations of the accuracy of their reconstructions of Babylon or of Nineveh. John Martin's pamphlet (1821) describing Belshazzar's Feast is one such explanation; and Martin's claims to accuracy were based on his having had access to Claude Rich's Memoirs of the Ruins of Babylon (published in 1815) and Thomas Maurice's Observations on the Ruins of Babylon (which appeared the following year), among other works. Like the panorama artist, John Martin succeeded in showing his public a satisfyingly detailed 'description' of his subject. He made the past come alive for many people, helping them to believe in the truth of the Bible account of Belshazzar's Feast. Samuel Colman, with his reference to Clarke's 'Travels' was clearly aware of the demand for this kind of verisimilitude when he painted the 'country about Jordan' in which John the Baptist preached. Both Martin and Colman, by affirming belief in the Bible, may have expected to give credence to the modern references they applied to their paintings, through symbols they knew would be recognized by many of their viewers. If the scenes they depicted could be shown to be authentic, the messages of the stories or incidents would be projected more forcefully than if the pictures appeared purely imaginative and their stories fictional. If Belshazzar could be seen to have had an actual existence in Babylon, then a modern Belshazzar (like the profligate George IV, or other, even more evil postfigurations) would be easy to identify and denounce. The modern counterpart of a 'fairy-story', Belshazzar would not carry the same threat to justice and morality.

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[49] See Jerry D. Meyer, 'Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Protestant Religious Art', Art Bulletin, 57, (1975), 247-265 (p. 263, notes 59 and 60). Barry's 'Progress of Theology' is referred to in The Works of James Barry (London, 1809), I, 282-3 and 320-22. Boydell's project is, according to Meyer, mentioned in Farington's Diary for 27 January 1807.

Two pictures by David Wilkie (1785-1841) suggest that he used the then current interest in history to make references to contemporary theology and/or politics. In 1822 he began a painting (finished in 1832 and now in the Tate Gallery) which shows John Knox preaching before the Lords of the Congregation on 10 June 1559. Knox had on that occasion taken as his subject Christ's casting out of the temple the money-changers, by whom, of course, Knox intended his hearers to understand the Roman Catholic bishops. Lindsay Errington has noted[50] that Wilkie's figure of Knox, with his dramatic gestures, may have been modeled on the controversial Scottish preacher, Edward Irving, who was making a sensation in London in the 1820s. (Wilkie knew Irving and had often heard him preach.) Wilkie was not, it seems, an overtly political propagandist. He was an observer, a visual historian, rather than an agitator. So John Knox Preaching should perhaps be seen as a record of a moment in Scottish history, and the likeness of the central character to Irving should then be taken as no more than the artist's use of a convenient model for the dynamic sixteenth-century reformer. However, though Wilkie may have intended to go no further than this, he must have been aware of Irving's fervent anti-Catholicism in the years immediately preceding the Catholic Relief Act of 1829. By 1832, when Wilkie completed his painting, he must also have known about the schism which was developing within the Presbytery of London because of Irving's controversial views on the work of the Holy Spirit and on the humanity of Jesus. In other words, Wilkie may have been acknowledging current interest in Irving's politics and theology by painting an Irving-like Knox. Besides this it is very tempting to believe that this characterization of Knox implied a recognition by the artist that the painting would champion Irving as a serious reformer, worth an important place in history, at a time when many people viewed him as a mere actor, fascinating for his theatrical charisma alone.

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[50] See The Artist and the Kirk (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 7 and 8. This publication formed the catalogue of an exhibition held at the National Gallery of Scotland, November 1979 - January 1980. See also Dr Errington's more recent and much fuller essay, Tribute to Wilkie (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 72, 73. This catalogue was published in association with the exhibition held at the National Gallery of Scotland, 26 July 1985 - 13 October 1985. I am grateful to my adviser, Dr Duncan Macmillan, for drawing my attention to Wilkie's use of pictures as vehicles for dogma.

John Knox Dispensing the Sacrament at Calder House (National Gallery of Scotland) is an unfinished painting which Wilkie meant as a companion to John Knox Preaching. Here the obvious influence of Italian art - which introduces a composition very like Leonardo da Vinci's (and even more like Tiepolo's) Last Supper into the Scottish communion scene - adds to the impact of Knox's Protestant ceremony. All classes of society are present, all participating; and Knox, who is placed at the centre of the communion table, takes charge of the cups which hold the symbolic wine. With Knox dressed in a simple black gown, the portrait is definitely not one of the mass, which, as Wilkie would have been aware, the Westminster Confession calls 'that popish sacrifice'. Instead it is a reminder of Christ's sacrifice for all humanity, as Knox (who is a 'type' of Christ, in his character of reformer) presides over a 'supper' from a communion table, not from an altar, elaborately ornamented and set apart from the congregation. If Wilkie intended a 'political' message (and he is known to have been well aware of the Oxford Movement within the Church of England) and if his viewers read such a message into the painting when it appeared at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1843, it is probable that it was directed at the Anglican Church, whose head was the monarch and whose clergy encouraged 'Romish' practices.

On another level Wilkie's paintings - and John Martin's pictures of Belshazzar's Feast or of the Fall of Nineveh - would have appealed to their viewers simply because of the drama they projected in their very different ways. Many of Turner's pictures, biblical and otherwise, would have attracted people for this reason too. The dangers of war and of predicted natural catastrophes, the tensions of political change and social unrest required a mirror in the literature and in the visual arts. West and Blake, de Loutherbourg and Fuseli, Turner, Wilkie, Martin, Danby and Colman - all of these artists needed, like many contemporary writers, to express or comment on the prevailing mood of the times. In turn, they recognized the public demand for confirmation of their feelings and responded by feeding that demand with more work that, in the case of many of the most visionary paintings, has been variously termed 'the school of catastrophe', the 'apocalyptic sublime' and so on. Wilkie, of course, belonged to a gentler, more naturalistic school of social commentary, which employed narrative, rather than spectacle to attract interest.)

The pessimism which seems most obviously to have been felt by people just about the time Samuel Colman was beginning his career in Bristol has been thought by art historians in quite recent years to have been responsible for a characteristic vagueness or distortion of space in many paintings of the period. There is an uncertainty about the size of the landscape and a vastness which often offers the viewer no relief. There is what has been termed 'prospect' without 'refuge'.[51] Eric Adams has summarized the situation: 'The uncertain future facing post-Waterloo England is impressively symbolized by the incalculable distances and the unresolved climatic effects of romantic landscape painting. After the railways and the subsidence of the revolutionary menace had cleared this doubtful territory, the apocalyptic mania declined, and English art settled down to the contemplation of the here-and-now'.[52]

Francis Danby's work, during the London phase of his career, illustrates the power of the 'apocalyptic mania'. Increasingly in the later 1820s, Danby turned from the depiction of warmly diffused light and enclosed, secure spaces, to the painting of epic scenes in which startling shafts of light burst from sun or moon or from some supernatural source. Vast spaces are overcast by clouds and tiny, anonymous figures or outsize beings replace the friendly, recognizable characters who peopled the artist's Bristol views. Danby's personal life became more and more complicated and unhappy during these years, so the gloomy and passionate paintings can be explained as attempts to express and work out frustrations. However, Danby can not have been unaware of the general obsession with catastrophe in the newspapers, in poems (by Byron, to name just one influential writer), in stories (by Mary Shelley, for example). And he was definitely very much aware of a need to compete with John Martin for the attention of the public. *The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt* which Danby painted in 1825 (and which probably influenced Martin's watercolours of *The Last Man* and *The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host*) and *An Attempt to Illustrate the Opening of the Sixth Seal* (1828) were regarded in their day as wonderful manifestations of imaginative genius. And *The Sixth Seal* (now in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin) was sold to William Beckford, who had commissioned Benjamin West to paint pictures for a (never realized) 'Revelation Chamber' at Fonthill in the 1790s, who had bought Turner's *Fifth Plague of Egypt* in 1800, and who had employed John Martin to make drawings of Fonthill Abbey in 1822.

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[51] See Jay Appleton, The Experience of Landscape (London, 1975), pp. 73-74, as cited by Paulson, Literary Landscape, p. 6.

[52] Francis Danby, pp. 76-77.

Beckford's obsession with doom and his retreat from industrializing city to 'Gothick' estate was undoubtedly extreme. Yet, as the alteration in Danby's style and subject-matter indicates, there was a general tendency to 'melancholy' in these years, and 'incalculable distances' seem to dominate many of the most important paintings: Turner's magnificent storms, Martin's tumbling cities, Danby's mysteriously lit scenes of apocalyptic clamour or of exotic landscape, and Samuel Colman's peculiarly 'unresolved climatic effects' in such scenes of 'sublime' drama as The Edge of Doom (Plate 116) and The Deluge (Plate 145).

Thomas Cole, who learned a great deal from Martin, and even more from Turner, made important contributions to the genre of the 'apocalyptic sublime' with his many paintings of ruins (Gothic and classical) and of nature in violent moods. Like Turner and Martin, Cole appears to have had an ambivalent attitude to the Industrial Revolution - welcoming some improvements, fearing other technical changes as a threat to the American 'wilderness' he loved. His view of civilization, as expressed in The Course of Empire, will be given more detailed consideration in Section D (Chapter Eight). However, The Oxbow, which is one of Cole's best known and most recognizably American paintings, appears to summarize the melancholy he and other Romantic painters felt.

The Oxbow was painted by Cole in 1836 as an exhibition piece, while he was labouring to finish The Course of Empire for his patron, Luman Reed. Its coming into being followed not far behind the publication of the artist's 'Essay on American Scenery';[53] and the picture can be taken, in itself, as a manifesto on American landscape. It presents a wide-angled view of the Connecticut River valley. In fact, the openness of the scene reminds one of the views of Hampstead (and sometimes of Dedham) which Constable made - looking out over the shoulder of a hill at the uninterrupted sweep of the countryside. The tiny figure of an artist looks down from Cole's New England hillside with its weather-beaten and cropped trees. Like a small, lonely prophet he gazes out over the pleasantly cultivated valley, perhaps wondering how long the wilderness can withstand the siege laid on it by civilization.

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[53] Cole's essay was printed in The American Monthly Magazine, New Series I (January 1836), pp. 1-12. The material had previously been aired as a lecture Cole gave to the New York Lyceum in May 1835.

For 'what is called improvement' Cole's 'Essay' expressed 'regret rather than complaint; such is the road society has to travel'. His comments remind one of Constable's words on the subject of a dying elm - remarks he made in his last lecture at Hampstead.[54] In his lectures Constable was fond of quoting from Thomson's Seasons (which he also quarried for explanatory or complimentary texts when presenting his own landscapes for exhibition). One of his references was taken from Thomson's Winter:

> See, Winter comes, to rule the varied year,
>   Sullen and sad, with all his rising train,
> Vapours, and Clouds, and Storms. Be these my theme,
>   These! that exalt the soul of solemn thought,
> And heavenly musing.

Cole was also familiar with Thomson, so it is no surprise to find, in his own lecture, that he calls the sky 'the soul of all scenery'. If not exactly like a soul, the sky above the Connecticut River looks like a face, wiped clean after a tantrum or fit of weeping, and suddenly brightened by a smile. Very much in the manner of Constable, the view has an enormous depth of vision. The colours are clean and vivid and the effect of the picture - if regarded in the light of a smile (which rather negates the elegaic viewpoint) - is of relief and renewal. In fact The Oxbow has both the unsettling allusiveness and the cheering characteristics of Constable's Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows and of his earlier Dedham Vale. Cole himself provided a suitable commentary in a poem written in 1835:

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[54] John Constable's Discourses, p. 71.

> So storms of ill, when passed away,
> Leave in the soul serene delight;
> The gloom of the tempestuous day
> But makes the following calm more bright.[55]

These sentiments draw attention to a feature of early nineteenth-century painting which Mario Praz terms the 'magical beyond'. He introduces the phenomenon by referring to Bosch's painting in the Doge's Palace in Venice which shows The Ascent into the Empyrean (1505-16): angels guiding souls out of the dark cave of lower existence through a cylindrical tunnel into the infinite light of the home of God. 'The romantics use this very same structure [a 'real' foreground scene connected to or projected towards a 'magical beyond' by means of some prominent shape, such as Bosch's tunnel or an arched window] for the expression not of an actually religious aspiration, but of a dream, an expectation, a hope beyond the sphere of everday events. The elements of escape are no longer offered by the divine, but by nature: their vision . . . is no longer mediated through faith, but is the result of an unmediated experience, a direct sensuous intuition'.[56]

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[55] This is a stanza from a poem Cole wrote in his diary. It appears in full as Poem 19 in Marshall B. Tymn, 'An Edition of the Nature Poetry of Thomas Cole' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1970 - later published but not traceable by the present author).

This observation would certainly seem to apply to many of Turner's paintings. A good example is The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last Berth (R.A., 1839, and now in the National Gallery, London). As Robert Rosenblum points out, 'the poignancy of this symbolic burial is further underlined by the sooty little tugboat in the foreground, which offers a realistic foil of the mundane here-and-now to the visionary spectacle of the passing of man's achievements beyond some distant horizon'.[57] The visionary aspect of the scene is provided by Turner's inclusion in what Rosenblum calls the 'remote, inaccessible beyond' of the sun and the sun's light, of which Turner had (returning to Praz for definition) 'a direct sensuous intuition'. The overwhelming effect of this vision of nature should not, however, be allowed to destroy the information provided by Turner's uses of familiar Christian symbols, like the ship and the sun. Turner's symbolism leaves the impression that he may have had religious hope, and that the pessimism observed in him by Ruskin and by Thornbury (Turner's first biographer) was a disaffection with civilization on earth, not a total despair.[58] Andrew Wilton claims that 'the numinous power of nature is repeatedly celebrated [in Turner's paintings] and the omnipotent energy and saving grace of the sun constanly hymned. This was for Turner the religious sublime - far from being pessimistic his work often ecstatically exults in the consciousness of a superhuman force working in and through the natural world to the good of men'.

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[56] Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts (London, 1970), p. 159.

[57] Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition (London, 1975), p. 35.

[58] See Wilton, p. 102. The quotation which follows is from the same page.

This view places Turner in a somewhat similar relationship to nature to that of German Romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) his very close contemporary. Friedrich's mystical paintings appear to reflect the mood of his generation in Germany, and in particular to put into visual terms the theology of the Berlin Protestant writer, F.E.D. Schleiermacher, who emphasized the spiritual, the personal response to the mysterious power of God, as opposed to the following of traditional church ritual or of eighteenth-century rationalism. Friedrich also seems to have been influenced by the philosopher, Novalis, with whom he would have come into contact in Dresden; and in his landscapes he apparently tried to articulate the kinds of beliefs held by Novalis. God is shown present by the imitation of nature, in which He is made flesh. Like Turner, Friedrich painted sublime vastness (in his Monk by the Sea, for example, which was carried out in 1809). His Arctic Shipwreck of 1824 leaves the same impression as a Turner avalanche that nature is cruel, and in final triumph over a desolate and puny human attempt to claim supremacy. However, as in Turner's, there is in Friedrich's work a frequent appearance of the 'magical beyond' - in Chalk Cliffs at Ruegen, for instance (1818-1820), in which the real world of foreground figures (botanists or bird-watchers?) suddenly opens out over fantastic spikes of chalk to reveal a vast, apparently infinite expanse of water and light. On the right is a man standing with his back to the viewer, and Roger Cardinal suggests that this man may be Friedrich himself and that the viewer of the picture is expected to identify with this figure and so participate in the artist's sense of the distant scene as 'the projection of human imagination'.[59] Friedrich insisted that his views of transient civilization - the wrecked ship, the ruined abbey, the lonely monk - ought to direct one's meditations to the life beyond the present. Though Friedrich's paintings were by no means always understood in this positive way by his contemporaries, his optimism is important and will be returned to later in this study.

In acknowledging the signs of hope in Friedrich's pictures, one is encouraged to look for such hints or open affirmations in the work of other artists of the period. In a very different way - or rather, in two very different ways - William Blake and a younger artist working in Germany, Philipp Otto Runge (1777-1810), who each appear to have been powerfully attracted to the writings of Jakob Bohme, developed mysterious iconographies which affirmed God's redemptive purposes. West's forward-looking last version of Death on the Pale Horse (1817, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts) should also be remembered. Late in his career, John Martin painted The Plains of Heaven (1853) which is as sweet and bright as The Great Day of His Wrath (painted the previous year) is harsh and hopeless.

Samuel Colman's own vision of the 'magical beyond' appears in a number of important pictures, in The Destruction of the Temple, in The Delivery of Israel, in the watercolour of The Deluge, most notably. Always, in these scenes, the 'magic' place which can be seen through the vortex created by the violent waters of the Red Sea, or the upheaval of everything on earth at the time of the Deluge is God's place, a 'refuge' as well as a 'prospect'. These visions will, of course, receive particular examination in later chapters.

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[59] German Romantics in Context (London, 1975), p. 76.

Perhaps the essential and unequivocal optimism of Samuel Colman can be demonstrated by comparing, yet again, the different interpretations of 'St John Preaching' which were made by Colman and by Thomas Cole. Whereas Cole's prophet is a somewhat isolated figure, standing high on his rock, very tiny and rather like the Last of the Mohicans, snared by a hostile tribe, Colman's St John is closer to the congregation and to the viewer. He stands above his hearers, but by only about the height of a pulpit; and the entire valley in front of him is open and colourful, with converts as well as critics prominent among those near him.

The message of personal salvation, which appears in the late work of Thomas Cole, seems to have been present at least as early as 1821 in Colman's biblical paintings. In 1827 the young Cole was probably attempting to express the social isolation of his prophet, and the warnings he gave to those symbolized by 'every tree . . . which bringeth not forth good fruit'; in other words he was appealing to the people of America to make themselves worthy to inherit the Promised Land, and he was not at all certain of success in his mission. Colman, however, was saying something to the people of Bristol (and London; it will be remembered that his painting was shown there in 1822), something which was in the mouths of many preachers - the message that all flesh should see the salvation of God.

As far as can be determined from the little that is known about his life, Samuel Colman was never commissioned to take part in any grand scheme of church decoration which would have aimed to contribute to a new Protestant style of painting. If his major works - the five large apocalyptic pictures - were carried out for one patron, they must have been even more privately commissioned than Beckford's 'Revelation Chamber', in his early arrangement with West. And unlike West and Turner, Martin and Danby, and Thomas Cole, Colman does not appear to have exhibited his work in the metropolis to any important extent - so that the impact of his repeated choice of richly symbolic biblical subjects and of his use of 'sublime' imagery was not felt by a large public. Yet he was painting a type of picture which was potentially most accessible. And it seems clear, from what the Bristol newspapers show, and from the paintings themselves, that, like Cole and Blake and Turner, Samuel Colman saw his role in life to be that of both artist and prophet. Perhaps it may even be true to say that he identified the artist with the prophet. Colman left behind no verbal comments to make his self-identification absolutely unequivocal. However, the Quaker rhymer, Bernard Barton did write down his thoughts about his perception of the duties of the poet-preacher; and maybe these are not out of place in reference to the Independent painter:

> It is the privilege of the Poet, if he will but use it, well and wisely, freely to give utterance to that which, in no other form, perhaps, he would have courage to express, or a great portion of his fellow-creatures toleration enough to listen to . . . Is not Poetry . . . when used and not abused, when honoured and not degraded, one of the most natural allies, one of the most potent and persuasive advocates of Religion? 60

It seems right to end this section with a final view of St John Preaching - Colman's picture so much maligned in the Bristol Mercury -

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60 Bernard Barton and Lucy Barton, The Reliquary (London, 1836), pp. 15 and 19.

as a little painting up for auction under the tree in Colman's own *St James's Fair*. By 1824, when the picture of the fair was painted, the 1821 oil painting had become an emblem, in Colman's imagination. The richness of its meaning will be examined in Chapter Five. But on one level it unquestionably proclaims that the artist can be present as a prophet in the most unlikely places. Where a preacher - or even an angel - might fear to tread, access may be gained for the painter-prophet.

SECTION B

The Prophet as Preacher and Politician

CHAPTER FIVE

A Sermon on St James's Fair

The themes which occupy Samuel Colman's largest canvases are identical with topics which cropped up again and again in the pages of the Congregational Magazine and the Eclectic Review during the years when the artist was living in Bristol. Spiritual and Moral reform, anti-slavery agitation, the country-wide interest in Parliamentary reform were matters dealt with by Church-sponsored magazines too; but the most consistently vigorous handling of these subjects was done by nonconformist journals. Colman confirmed the interest of local Congregationalism in these current affairs by applying his talents as a subject painter to the causes supported by his denomination, and this chapter will concentrate on how he presented his opinions in one important picture, transforming the artist into preacher and politician.

St James's Fair (Pl. 30) is signed and dated 'S. Colman, 1824'. Morton Paley refers to it as 'a veritable anthology' of the painter's beliefs.[1] Certainly the picture displays a number of references to specific complaints against the Bristol fair, and appears to be conveying messages about other, more general evangelical preoccupations. The intricate and varied and yet easily intelligible use of traditional symbolism also makes the painting a 'primer' of Colman iconography.

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[1] The Apocalyptic Sublime (in preparation for publication in 1986).

It will shortly be seen just why the annual fair in St James's churchyard was of such interest to evangelical observers in Bristol. It is also important to remember the popularity with Bristol artists of fairs and related events. Rolinda Sharples began a picture of the Bristol fair in 1824, though this painting is now lost.[2] Lost too is Edward Bird's The Country Auction. As suggested above, Bird's picture is likely to have provided Colman with a number of starting points for his version of the scene. According to George Cumberland, author of the Catalogue of Pictures painted by the Late Edward Bird, Royal Academician, the Country Auction included an old peasant with a Bible (where Colman introduced a bookseller), a young couple, a gamekeeper (Colman's countryman with a stick, perhaps) and a little girl with a looking-glass (for whom Colman has substituted a lady of inordinate vanity). A sketch for Bird's painting survives in the Wolverhampton Art Gallery. This bears out Cumberland's remarks in general terms, and one can make out the gamekeeper on the right, and on the left identify the group of children Cumberland notes as playing with a kitten. Cumberland also tells his readers that the picture by Bird displayed 'the prying curiosity of the country connoisseurs examining the merits of an old picture' - an intriguing forecast of the auction under the oak tree in Colman's St James's Fair.[3]

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[2] See Francis Greenacre, The Bristol School of Artists, p. 205, in reference to the Ellen Sharples diary. (Rolinda's painting of the fair is referred to on p. 209 of the typescript copy in the City Art Gallery, Bristol.)

[3] The quotations from Cumberland's catalogue are taken from page eight. The Avon County Reference Library has a copy of the catalogue - B 23146.

E.V. Rippingille (also as already noted) was interested in the fair as a picture subject. Several related paintings exist.[4] One deals directly with the fair itself, while The Recruit and The Recruiting Party (Pl. 32) make quite open comments about the unfair tactics used at fairs, among other places, to inveigle young men into service in the armed forces. It seems likely that Rippingille's Recruiting Party (on panel, almost the same size as Colman's fairground scene) may have had something to do with the arrangement in St James's Fair of the prominent tree and the buildings positioned at angles leading the eye into the picture space and towards a distant hillside. The Recruiting Party was painted in 1822 and although it was not shown in Bristol in public until 1826 it made a successful appearance at the Royal Academy in 1822. Colman would have been able to see it there, if not in Bristol, especially since it was in 1822 that his own St John Preaching was exhibited at the Academy.

Although George Cumberland felt, according to the Catalogue, that Bird's Country Auction was a painting 'without any tincture of classical learning', the picture shows the artist to have been a student of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish fairground scenes in which clever little hints of social analysis were made by means of 'vanitas' and other familiar symbols. Behind the rustic simplicity of the figures there was a long pedigree involving what can be termed 'visual signifiers'.

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[4] See Greenacre, pp. 131-133. It may also be of interest that Rippingille's Recruiting Party is very similar in composition to Trepanning a Recruit by William Redmore Bigg, R.A. (1755-1828). Bigg's picture was with the Russell Cotes Gallery, Bournemouth in 1937, when it appeared as Plate 72 in Sacheverell Sitwell's Narrative Pictures.

During the ten years when Bird was making a name for himself in London - that is, from 1809 until his death in 1819 - the fair was a popular subject with artists in many parts of the country. This popularity continued into the 1820s. At a time when many people, with writers and painters at their forefront, were excited by the prospect of catastrophe and intrigued by the supernatural, there was also a strong interest in the real. Constable's landscapes (Golding Constable's Kitchen Garden, painted in 1815, The Hay Wain itself, in 1821) describe actual English localities - patches of ground, stretches of water - which are in use by ordinary English folk, rather than 'sublime' mountain gorges or wild oceans suited to heroic dramas. John Linnell's Kensington Gravel Pits (1813) is another example of the powerful fascination for 'nature' experienced by a number of landscapists at this period. The land and those who worked on it were looked at with new sympathies and understanding - and also (noticeably by Constable) with what amounted to wilful ignorance of the changing expectations and conditions of working people in the years following the French Revolutionary wars. But, whatever the attitudes which brought them into being, these peaceful rural scenes present interesting reminders that response to political upheaval, and to growing agrarian and industrial development, that was based on the known (albeit nostalgically recalled) world, could take place in the artistic society of London at the same time that a fascination with the unknown was producing mystical, visionary pictures of violent supernatural change.

Paintings of country gatherings such as fairs simply concentrated on the people rather than their fields and cabbage patches. At the same time, the naturalism of these scenes could camouflage witty - and serious - comment on absurdites and evils.

David Wilkie's Pitlessie Fair (National Gallery of Scotland) was painted in 1804, although it was not shown in London until 1812, when it made its appearance as The Country Fair. The immediate circumstances of the picture are the annual fair held in Pitlessie, in Wilkie's home parish of Cults, Fife. Research has shown that the young painter made a remarkably faithful record of the market as it was in 1803, complete with well-observed cows of a newly improved breed, and with a recruiting party, something much in evidence that year. However, the artist also seems to have been inspired by Robert Ferguson's poem, 'Hallow Fair', along with the example of naturalistic paintings by David Allan and Alexander Carse, all fellow Scots.[5] Besides this, Wilkie was indebted to Dutch genre pictures; and although, unlike Bird, he does not seem to have been much interested in the use of traditional symbols, his inclusion in Pitlessie Fair of the local minister (his own father) in conversation with the publican, is likely to mean more than the simple passing of the time of day. In 1815 Wilkie showed Distraining for Rent at the Academy. With this picture his field of vision had been narrowed to focus on one family, in place of a crowd of country people, and he told the story of the humiliation and suffering forced on the tenant farmer and his dependants by post-war reductions in grain prices which meant that the tenant no longer had the wherewithal to pay for his lease. Many years later, in 1832, Jerrold's play, The Rent Day, took up the same theme as Wilkie's picture, and (a wonderful example of Ut pictura poesis) included tableaux based on Wilkie's The Rent Day and on Distraining for Rent.[6] In 1815, however, Wilkie's painting was not a success. His blunt sympathy with the distressed farmer was perhaps too embarrassing for viewers to cope with at the time and the purchasers of the painting, the Directors of the British Institution, consigned it to a lumber room, under the impression that the scene could be considered seditious. Veiled social comment, carried out in the lighter vein of Dutch genre painting, or in the sarcastic manner of Hogarth, sat more comfortably with the early nineteenth-century critics; and this is the method of approach to politics taken by Bird and Rippingille, and also by Samuel Colman in St James's Fair.

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[5] See Duncan Macmillan, 'Scottish Painting: The Later Enlightenment', Cencrastus, 19 (Winter, 1984), 25-27 (p. 25). For a detailed analysis of Pitlessie Fair see Lindsay Errington, Tribute to Wilkie, pp. 6-13.

In London Bird was considered by some connoisseurs in high places to be as important a newcomer as Wilkie, and his successes meant that his blend of naturalism and of social comment was bound to invite other essays on the same themes as his by Bristol admirers. Therefore, even without the challenge of Bristol's own notorious fair, Rippingille and Sharples and Colman would have been fairly up-to-date and reasonably sure of public attention in choosing to paint this kind of subject in the 1820s. And, as already suggested, they would have shared - simply by being fashionable in this way - in the legacy of Hogarth. In fact, for characters to include in his particular 'Vanity Fair', Colman borrowed widely form Hogarth's stock of 'unworthies'. These borrowings warrant detailed examination. First, however, the immediate relevance of Bristol's own fair must be looked at. Once this has been explained the various uses to which Colman put his knowledge of Hogarth and of traditional symbolism will be discussed. It will be seen that, like Hogarth - and to a more marked degree than Bird and Wilkie and Rippingille - Colman understood how to make the 'emblem habit' work to give vividness and enriched meaning to the apparently commonplace.

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[6] See Errington, Tribute to Wilkie, pp. 59-63. See also the National Gallery of Scotland: Shorter Catalogue, compiled by Colin Thompson and Hugh Brigstocke (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 117.

Although St James's Fair is both signed and dated (to 1824) there is no actual label on it in Colman's hand, identifying it as Bristol's fair. The background does not look like an accurate view of the Bristol of the period, and although the church in the distance appears somewhat similar to St James's parish church, it might be intended to represent St Michael's, Kingsdown, visible from the churchyard of St James's, though not at the angle presented here. The scene includes no real hint of autumn, as would be expected in a picture of a September event. In fact, a large bush between the church tower and the brothel appears to be a lilac in full bloom; and there is at least one tulip in the basket above the donkey. These details may have been slipped in deliberately, to disguise the subject. After all, Colman had some harsh things to say about the fair. It will be recalled that a Colman painting merely entitled 'The Fair' was shown in 1832 in an exhibition held by the Bristol Society of Artists.

On the other hand, there are one or two strong clues in the painting itself which help to link it with the annual Bristol fair in St James's precincts. The bookstall which is given a prominent place on the left of the scene appears to have been modelled on the book exhibit set up at the fair by one J. Bowden. According to a newspaper advertisement of 1 September 1823, Mr Bowden's supply of books could be viewed 'during the Fair, On the Paved Walk, in St. James's Church-

Yard, or at No. 12, Bridewell Lane'. The stock included new and second-hand books, comprising works by Bunyan, Fox, Locke and Newton, with 'a wide variety of Friends' Books' and 'a variety of Folio and other Bibles'. Apparently there were also copies of the works of Hogarth to be purchased, and 'a very fine assortment of useful and instructive Juvenile Books'.[7] In 1824 Bowden's advertisement (on 30 August) announced him to be 'grateful for past favours'. His stall was again to be viewed 'on the Paved Walk'. This year it included among the books the 'Statutes at Large' in thirteen volumes, besides a number of Scott's novels and 'a great variety of cheap Bibles' and collections of hymns by Watts, Wesley, and others. There were also school books for sale and music at three pence per sheet. A 'large collection of musical instruments' was on show, 'consisting of a Piano-Forte, Bass-Viol, bassoons, excellent Violins, trumpets, Horns, cheap Flutes, Octives, Fifes and Flageolets'.[8]

Another topical detail in St James's Fair is to be seen in the torn playbill tacked to the wall of the house at the right. This reads: 'THEATRE/ Road to Ruin' and clearly refers to Thomas Holcroft's play of that title - a drama about a young man who almost causes the collapse of his father's bank through falling into idle ways and bad company. Colman is likely to have known of the play's performance in Bristol; an advertisement appeared in the Bristol Mercury on 9 June 1821, announcing that the Theatre Royal would present 'Holcroft's Comedy, called THE ROAD TO RUIN' on 'Whit-Monday, June 11, 1821' (p. 3, col. 1).

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[7] Bristol Mercury, p. 3, col. 2.

[8] Bristol Mercury, p. 3, col. 1. Bowden's was not the only 'improving' exhibition during the fair. The 8 September Mercury (1823) recommended the current Panorama as particularly suitable for 'the young people, who do not like to venture in the crowded mart of dissipation, as there is nothing capable of exciting an improper idea, or leaving behind the slightest formation of an improper reflection' (p. 3, col. 4).

St James's Fair dated back to the late twelfth century, when it was issued a charter by William, Earl of Gloucester. By Colman's day the fair had become notorious for the crime and general lewdness that went with the legitimate market and the harmless entertainment it provided. Various attacks on the fair were put into print in the 1820s, in the local newspapers. For instance, the Mercury commented on 8 September 1823, that 'in addition to the other performances of the Fair, the light-fingered gentry have given many specimens of their talents . . . Watches, handkerchiefs, shawls, scarfs, and reticules have disappeared with all the celerity of the most professed legerdemain . . . Many serious losses have been sustained' (p. 3, col. 4). Also in 1823, a Dissenting minister, the Revd G.C. Smith, published a batch of pamphlets under the heading, Bristol Fair but NO PREACHING.[9]

The Revd Smith's ten pamphlets constitute a vigorous and readable account of specific grievances felt by many local people because of the existence of the fair, and tell the story of Mr Smith's personal conflict with the Church authorities over permission to preach at the fair. Since there is no verbal commentary on the event by Samuel Colman, the pamphlets by Revd Smith may be taken to represent the contemporary nonconformist point of view about St James's Fair; and they certainly provide explanations for a number of odd details in Colman's painting. Samuel Colman is likely to have been acquainted with G.C. Smith, for although Mr Smith hailed from Penzance and normally worked in London, he was a well-known preacher who travelled extensively to coastal towns to speak to sailors at the Floating Chapels provided by the Seaman's Friend Society.[10] Colman's own minister, the Revd William Thorp of Castle Green, was also an active member of the Society. And John Hare, Jr. and Richard Ash, who were to become trustees of Zion Chapel, were both members of the committee of the Bristol branch of the Seaman's Friend Society at the time of its fifth anniversary meeting in 1825.[11]

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[9] There is a bound copy of the collected pamphlets in the Avon County Reference Libary - B 10241. Quotations from the pamphlets will be followed by numbers referring to the series (Pamphlets I-VI make up Series One, and Pamphlets VII-X form the Second Series) and to the page number within the series.

The first pamphlet begins with a note on the origin of fairs. Revd Smith considers that fairs were once commercially important, but that modern communications mean that most traders have no real need to gather together in large numbers annually, except perhaps in London. Fairs have now (that is, by 1823) degenerated into 'the greatest moral pestilence to society that can exist in a civilized country' (I, p. 4).

The writer then describes the depravity of the showmen:

> Without education and without God, they have no heaven but this world and no concern for another. Having no character to support and no social circle to enliven and influence, all those principles that render the

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[10] See Bristol Mercury, 19 May 1823, p. 3, col. 5. Having received false information from a London newspaper, the Mercury printed an obituary notice about Revd Smith. Upon discovering that he was still alive, the editor issued an announcement to that effect on 26 May (p. 3, col. 5). However, the obituary is useful for its biographical information.

[11] See Proceedings at the Fifth Anniversary of the Bristol Seaman's Friend Society and Bethel Union (Bristol, 1825). There is a copy of this pamphlet in Edinburgh University Library - C.R. 11. 3. 10/5. Cameron Collection.

> Englishman's home so dear to him have no place in their hearts, and cannot possibly influence their lives (I, p.4).

Although this sounds like the attitude of a Mr Gradgrind, Revd Smith's condemnation of the travelling show people was actually mixed with a generous amount of pity and kindness. 'I have often been struck with the thought', he explains, 'of our labouring to send the Gospel to the Bazaar-Fairs and Idol-Temples of the Heathen, and withholding it from the more infernal carnivals of vice at home' (I, p. 6). He recalls that he has preached at fairs in Greenwich, Peckham, Camberwell, and at Smithfield, the site of Bartholomew's Fair, and that 'the showmen and women and children have uniformly attended, and behaved with suitable decorum: such has been the power of religion over the most hardened minds'.

It is interesting to see that in Colman's painting of the Bristol fair, the 'Englishman's home' on the left (obviously 'dear to him' in more senses than one, since there is a Union insurance plaque on the wall) is contrasted with the 'Lodgings' on the right. Where the house is all neatness - with swallows nesting under the eaves, close to the green creeper, smoke rising straight up into the sky, and a boy reading to his mother at the open window - the building on the other side of the fairground is in a tumble-down condition. The smoke from its chimneys is blown horizontally towards a dead tree (quite unlike the upright oak across the way); the walls are cracked and peeling with a withered vine clinging to them; the window-frames fall outwards; and a man at the entrance leans tipsily against the doorpost. The picture of ill-health presented by this house is completed by the notice on the wall which, although it has been torn, still reads 'EREAL/ ʌPLAINTS'. Obviously the 'principles that render the Englishman's home so dear to him' have no place in the hearts of the temporary inhabitants of this shabby place.

Revd Smith next informs his readers that he is on a visit to Bristol and has taken lodgings overlooking the fairground:

> St. James's Church-yard . . . embraces a large square of ground, around which private houses and shops are erected. One part of the square is enclosed with an elegant iron railing as a burial ground, and the other, forming a triangle, is thrown open to the public, with the exception of a dwarf wall by the street. On this triangualr spot the annual Fair of this City is held, commencing on the first of September. The ground, I understand . . . belongs to the parish of St. James . . . and it is let out by the Vestry at a certain sum per foot during the Fair (I, p. 7).

Later (page 18), the visitor gives details of the high rental charges reputedly paid to the churchwardens by the showmen. 'A sort of roundabout, by which persons have often been killed, pays, they say, £17.' The roundabout just referred to may be the large amusement wheel pictured by Colman just beyond the tree at the left. A man with a trumpet loudspeaker can be seen hailing the crowd of young people on the wheel, as if to shout 'Time's up!'.

Mr Smith deplores the ways in which the fair attracts youth. There were:

> Bills and advertisements of course, while each newspaper had its puffing paragraph. All the various instruments of music were also pressed into service, with the usual rolls of painted canvas, lamps, illuminations and invitations. The open doors of public houses and the sound of the fiddle, had a most constraining influence on labourers, tradesmen and young persons to join the dance; and the host of barkers at the doors of houses, and men and women, purposely placed in the street to stop the passengers from passing right on, induced multitudes to step aside and see the wonders of the Fair (I, p. 11).

This is exactly the scene pictured by Colman. The stalls overlooked by the houses of the town, the people in town and country costumes, the fiddler and others engaged in making noise, even the 'bills and advertisements' described by the preacher - all are included in Colman's own portrait of the fair. The menagerie in the distance is another feature of the actual fair. Smith's first pamphlet condemns the Bristol Mirror ('a respectable weekly') for its enticing mention of the various fairground oddities, including the 'whimsical monkeys' (p. 10).

It is fairly certain that Colman agreed whole-heartedly with the perception of the event as stated by the preacher on page nine of the opening leaflet of the series:

> I believe there was sin enough committed in St. James's Churchyard last week to ruin a whole nation. Every morning the confusion began about 11 o'clock, it increased mightily about three and four in the afternoon, and was at its height about 10 o'clock at night . . . Thousands of persons flocked in from all parts of the surrounding Country, and were led on, step by step, to the commission of crimes that years of penitence will not wash away, and perhaps eternity itself will not obliterate.

The horrible irony of the fair was that:

> While publicans, prostitutes and thieves will meet together to divide the booty; the showmen will move off to Birmingham, to get more money and send more souls to Hell; and individuals of St. James's will meet in Vestry to appropriate the monies received for the shows and standings to the purposes of the Parish (I, p. 16).

In addition the churchwardens were totally opposed to the preaching of the Gospel in their parish churchyard during the fair, as Revd Smith proposed to do (and attempted to do). The bulk of the pages in pamphlets II to X is taken up by the minister's account (often lively) of his 'run-in' with the parish and municipal authorities over this matter. The story brings out a number of important considerations which Colman is likely, as a Dissenter, to have had in mind when composing his picture.

In the first place, the Revd Smith recognized that his joining an open-air preaching band and addressing the 'poor guilty showmen' was considered eccentric by the 'professedly regular, prudent, and cold calculating policy of worldy-minded persons', but he pled guilty to the 'charge of enthusiasm' with open satisfaction (II, pp. 27 and 28). He was used to this sort of condemnation. What he found shockingly perverse were the reasons he was given for the authorities' refusal to allow him to preach in the fairground. Summoned to the Mansion-House, Mr Smith was informed by the Mayor himself that his open-air sermons had constituted a breach of the peace. And when the minister's interview with the Mayor was apparently over, Alderman Fripp, who had been present in the room too, surprised Mr Smith by suddenly remarking that the churchyard used for the fair was consecrated ground and that 'no dissenter can be allowed to hold forth his opinions on consecrated ground belonging to the Church' (IV, p. 58).

This official, or those who influenced him (undoubtedly the churchwardens) obviously still held the opinions manifested in Lord Sidmouth's attempt to curtail severely the licencing of itinerant preachers. Lord Sidmouth's Bill (of 1811) had failed, but at a local level the people in power still tried to prevent proselytizing by Dissenters. Nonconformist preachers were suspected of radical politicking; radical opinions could easily be spread in the open among people who would never enter a church or chapel. The Mayor told Revd Smith that the preaching of the Gospel should be done in churches and chapels. When Mr Smith pointed out that 'thousands will not and do not enter them' the Mayor rejoined, 'That is their own fault' (IV, p. 54). He was not moved by Smith's asking him to recall that Christ, as Good Shepherd, came 'to seek as well as to save'.

In his conversation with the Mayor, Mr Smith discovered that the comfort of the members of the Corporation attending St James's church had taken official precedence over provision for the poor and sick, who had had to stand throughout a special service for lack of the usual benches. He noted that un-Christlike neglect was forcing the poor out of the churches; they found pew rents too high and most congregations so richly dressed that, as humbler mortals, they were ashamed to try to assemble with them. 'No one likes the mortification of such obvious contrasts', said Mr Smith. 'Poverty and adversity . . . chuse to herd together; and, in the open air, they can do this so that, when the weather is suitable, they can hear the Gospel and be as much benefitted as within the walls of any building' (IV, p. 61).

Before the end of his interview, the indomitable Mr Smith managed to persuade the Mayor not to interfere with his speaking at the Fair unless a riot broke out. However, the good preacher's plans were forestalled by the churchwardens, who delayed him as he was about to go out into the fairground. Eventually, instead of speaking to the show people, the minister put pen to paper and launched into his publication of pamphlets about the corrupting influence of the fair and the hypocrisy of the prominent townspeople who claimed to deplore the vices of the season but who were willing to benefit from the revenues the fair brought to the parish of St James. These people lamely pleaded the fixed nature of the Charter given to the fair as an excuse for the continued existence of the carnival in such a patently immoral form. The pamphlets make a repeated plea:

> Where are the holy zealous Samuels of Bristol? Why do they not cry aloud and spare not? . . . Yes, even now the Almighty speaks to every

> Minister of Bristol, to every Professor of Religion in Bristol, and to every Man who would advocate moral decency and integrity, 'Son of Man, hast thou seen this?' (VIII, pp. 20 and 21).

And elsewhere:

> Is Bristol content to sit down under this load of guilt and infamy and disgrace? What then will other cities and towns think of her Ministers, her Societies, her moral and religious tone? What will be said of those opulent and virtuous members of the Society of Friends, who have been always the first to step forward in the cause of oppression of morals and of humanity? . . . Will not they . . . call together the friends of morality generally in the City, that a Petition may be forwarded to the Legislature and supported by the City Members, that Bristol Fair may in future be confined to a Cattle Market . . . Does not the remedy lie with the people of Bristol? (VI, p. 88).

Samuel Colman was one of those Bristolians who responded to this challenge. Perhaps he did not even require the tracts to urge him to follow his biblical namesake in taking up God's cause in opposition to the civic and ecclesiastical authorities. However, in spite of all the agitation in the 1820s, St James's Fair was not abolished until the city fathers put an end to it in 1838. If The Fair shown by Colman in the Bristol exhibition of 1832 was a representation of St James's Fair, it can be inferred that the painter was at that time still doing his own kind of political lobbying. The cause, however, did not gain much ground until some time after the reform of the City Council, following the 1833 Royal Commission on Municipal Corporations.

It will now be appropriate to look again, and in a very careful way, at this picture which has already been seen to reflect, or parallel, Mr Smith's remarks on the fair. Just how did Colman manage to convey the minister's criticisms of the fair in visual terms?

At first glance the scene looks reasonably innocuous. A crowded fairground is the setting for the auction of a painting in the shade of a tall oak tree. In the distance gentle hills and tree-fronted houses enclose a long stretch of ground occupied by the swings and stalls of the carnival. All sorts of fair-goers can be seen, among them a country gentleman with top hat and whip, assorted working people, pedlars and a town crier. Young people are very much in evidence - driving off in their cart, taking a turn on the merry-go-round, examining finery, and engrossed in love. Two boys play a game of marbles, and little girls take a look at the stall to the left of the mirror. Another child mischievously hangs on to the departing vehicle, while a girl plays on a tambourine and a third young person collects a tip from a lady in the gig. In general terms the fair is a noisy, busy place. A fiddler scrapes at his instrument and people make merry around him.

It takes only another glance (and this has already been given) to see that all the enjoyment is very shallow and very sinister. The fashionably dressed young woman in the foreground appears to be eloping with her suitor. The ring he places on her finger is a bauble from a pedlar's box. The couple is watched by a grimacing woman whose pug dog peers at them over her arm. To the left of this central group another woman admires herself ostentatiously in a mirror - unaware of how ridiculous she looks while yet another woman, in a red cloak and blue dress, receives a 'billet doux' from a hidden admirer. The fine gentleman at the bookstall pays no attention to the improving literature on sale there, but is absorbed in a racing calendar. The town crier, dressed in his tricornered hat and cloak of office, reads a notice announcing the disappearance of a young girl: 'Lost at Vanity Fair: Miss Chastity'. Is the man with the stick and the clenched fist (who receives whispered information from a city beau) the father or employer of this runaway? Do we recognize the missing young woman in the neatly dressed girl at the right who is obviously being propositioned by the madam of the 'Lodging-house'? Page eighty-seven of Revd Smith's first series of tracts helps to make the situation absolutely clear:

> This morning I have been informed by a friend, that, during the Fair, servant girls have commonly . . . quit service and gone to it, where they have been eagerly received by prostitutes and thieves; but in about three weeks after the Fair, they have been found sleeping on the steps of doors at night, deserted and ruined, or rotting with diseases in cottages, cellars, garrets, or hospitals.

If the similarities to Revd Smith's tracts are obvious in St James's Fair, the artist's sympathies with the 'emblem tradition' are also clear, and help to expand the minister's more straightforward message.

In the first place, borrowings from Hogarth can be recognized without much difficulty in Colman's picture. The entertainment stalls at St James's Fair look like tame and tiny versions of those caricatured by Hogarth in Southwark Fair (1733), of which Colman must surely have seen an engraving. With single-minded seriousness, Colman has relegated the carnival fun-and-games to the background. If we look very carefully we can see that one of the stalls next to the menagerie has been rented by 'Hocus Pocus & Co'. However, we are forced to concentrate on the sinister relationships he has arranged in his groups of fair-goers. This is Babylon, and it was evidently too fully present in Bristol for the artist to allow himself the metaphor of the stage which often puts Hogarth's versions of the scene at an important remove from reality.

Colman may also have known an engraving of Hogarth's Four Times of Day: Morning (1738). The tall woman with the mittens and the long profile who is a central figure in Hogarth's picture seems to have been the model for the frivolous female in St James's Fair who admires herself in the mirror towards the left of the scene. To her right the elderly woman with the picture hat and the pug dog may have been modelled on the old woman with a fan who appears to the right in Plate Two of Hogarth's Industry and Idleness.

Immediately to the right of this scowling woman with her ribboned hat, Colman has inserted a man with a ribbon in his hat. He is an elderly fiddler, grinning as he scrapes a tune to add to the general din of the fairground. Colman has borrowed him, and his cockade, from An Election Entertainment, one of Hogarth's four election pictures of 1753-54. Hogarth's fiddler is an old woman, with the bow in her left hand. Colman's music maker is right-handed, but his instrument and his rosette come from Hogarth's picture.

Colman's most obvious indebtedness to Hogarth in St James's Fair appears on the right of the picture - the group showing a young girl being enticed into a life of sin by the madam of a brothel. Like Hogarth's erring young lady in the first plate of the Harlot's Progress (Pl. 33), this girl has probably just arrived in the town (by the cart seen leaving behind the 'lodging house', perhaps). As in Hogarth's print, the men behind the girl and her tempter are sinister figures, lurking in or near the doorway that will lead her to ruin. And, just as the Harlot's Progress was very much a picture of real life in London's streets, this scene by Colman was almost certainly based on what he had seen or heard of the evils of the fair in Bristol. Revd Smith again:

> Houses of ill fame were thrown open . . . and the guilty females of Lewin's Mead and the courts of Silver-Street were all on the alert in every part of the Fair, labouring with sleepless perseverance, to drag the unwary to their dens of infamy, and plunder them alike of virtue and of

> property. Even the worst of prostitutes, from that nest of hornets called Waterloo, in the Hotwell-road, found it would be to their interest nightly to prowl around the Fair. . . In short, Satan reigned during the whole of last week in St. James's Church-yard (I, pp. 14 and 15).

Interestingly, the figure of the girl herself in Colman's version of the story, is not entirely Hogarthian. Her pose is clearly derived from the girl in another well-known engraving, Turnips and Carrots, the final scene in Francis Wheatley's Cries of London.[12] Also taken from Turnips and Carrots are the donkey, the panniers, the vegetables and the boy.[13] Even the cobbled ground on which the group stands belongs to the Wheatley composition, rather than to Hogarth.

In spite of its links with Wheatley, however, the group of figures on the right in Colman's fairground remains very Hogarthian - so much so, in fact, that one expects to detect visual puns like the 'silly' goose hanging limply from M. Hackabout's basket in the Hogarth print. And quite clearly, Colman has made use of Wheatley's donkey to tell his viewers that the country girl is 'making an ass' of herself. This apt inclusion of such an emblem encourages one to wonder if Colman would have known the derivation of the word 'brothel' from the Old English verb 'breothan', meaning 'to go to ruin'. The playbill on the wall of the ruinous house certainly makes this speculation tempting.

Of course, the inclusion in St James's Fair of topical references and traditional popular symbols is also very Hogarthian. Some of these symbols are very obvious - the 'roundabout', for instance, and the brothel are both topical allusions; and the withered vine on the walls of the house of ill repute is a well-known symbol of evil and decay. There are also the hour-glass, and the mirror at the stall, linked nicely with the barometer which points to 'Change'. Yet, along with these familiar images, the artist has introduced odd or arresting details which are less easily identified nowadays as symbols, but which would have been ready to hand in the early nineteenth century in emblem books.

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[12] The set of thirteen scenes, engraved after Wheatley by various craftsmen, was originally published by Colnaghi in 1797. See Plate 34.

[13] The donkey is a stock character with Wheatley. He appears in The Amorous Sportsman (mezzotinted by Hodges) and in The Return from Market (Leeds City Art Gallery).

In Chapter Four it was suggested that the emblem in its common form was essentially a presentation of contrasts - the age-old differences between wisdom and the lack of it, sweetness and sourness, vitality and decrepitude, the Word of God and the wiles of the Devil. Such contrasts preoccupied writers on morals in the seventeenth century and are plentiful enough in the poetry of the Puritans - from Milton (Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained) to Bunyan (the Life and Death of Mr Badman). One possible reason for the emphasis placed on contrasts is that the philosophical inheritance of the Puritans included the writings of Petrus Ramus (or Pierre de la Ramée). Ramus was a Huguenot writer who stressed the notions of a symmetrical universe in which truth could be found by separating phenomena of nature and abstract concepts into opposite categories and extrapolating opposites for everything. (If corruption were observable, the incorruptible must also exist.) According to Alan Wallach, in a study of Thomas Cole's Dissenting background, the Ramist position was adopted, not only by the Puritans, but by the Dissenting Academies of the eighteenth century, and remained an active principle in the education of nonconformists into the nineteenth century.[14]

Thomas Cole's paintings and poems show characteristics that Wallach would interpret as Ramist insistence on contrasts: the dichotomy between morning and evening, innocence and sin, youth and age, the wilderness and the city. And, like Milton and Bunyan, Cole presents these contrasts in a linear, or serial form, in his Voyage of Life, for example, which consists of four separate paintings, or in pairs of pictures, like The Garden of Eden and The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and The Departure and The Return. Samuel Colman does not appear to have been interested in this method of demonstrating opposites. Instead he drew attention to contrasts within his pictures by using symbols of various kinds. In this respect, again, he can be seen as a follower of Hogarth's example. For, while Hogarth was a noted exponent of serial imagery, he was also adept at making intricate and ironic contrasts within some of his individual 'history' pictures. The March to Finchley (1749-50) is a good example; order is offset by chaos, dark contrasted with light, loyalty with treason. The elaborate allusions which can be detected create several levels or strata of meaning for the scene, or give point or humour to many of the details.

With less humour, perhaps, Samuel Colman developed the theme of the fair to include not only figures and 'Vanitas' images lifted more or less directly from Hogarth, but also traditional emblems and other visual references deployed to much the same effect as in an engraving by

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[14] See Alan P. Wallach, 'The Ideal American Artist and the Dissenting Tradition: A Study of Thomas Cole's Popular Reputation' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1973), p. 125.

Hogarth. Like his predecessor, Colman appreciated the inheritance they shared - the inheritance of popular emblems and of the habit of constructing private emblems with topical or local meaning - all emphasizing the dual nature of the human condition, and all framed in such a way as to point to truth.

This is not to say that Colman used emblems in quite the same way as did Hogarth. Hogarth appears to have been at pains, in using popular emblems, and in constructing his own by using famous _topoi_ from literature and art, not only to point out to his public the evils of the world around them, but to mock the elaborate iconographic system which had descended from Renaissance art - the grammar of classical allusions set out by Cesare Ripa, for instance, in his _Iconologia_ (1593). Colman, on the other hand, seems to have taken up emblems and emblem-making with John Bunyan's simple intention of preaching.

There are three details of _St James's Fair_ which are patent references to popular emblems. One should remember, while examining them, that Colman was adopting a form of communication well known, not just to admirers of Hogarth, or to cottagers raised on a staple literary diet of _Pilgrim's Progress_ and the _Book for Boys and Girls_, but to poets, hymn-writers, critics - the same people who were also interested in biblical typology and in the Bible as a source of poetic inspiration. Mario Praz points out that in 1775 _The Gospel Magazine_ published the Revd Augustus Toplady's hymn, the (now famous) 'Rock of Ages', which, according to Praz, 'draws all its metaphors from Quarles's emblems'.[15] Praz also notes the interest shown by Swift, Cowper and

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[15] _Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery_ (Rome, 1964), p. 15.

Charles Lamb in old emblem books. Byron owned a copy of Cat's Proteus and both Clare and Ruskin were admirers of Italian emblematists. Clearly the fascination was long-lasting.

The first English emblem book was Geoffrey Whitney's A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devises (1586). George Wither's Collection of Emblemes followed in 1635, and Francis Quarles's Emblems, Divine and Moral was also published during that year. As already mentioned (Chapter Four) Bunyan's Divine Emblemes, or Temporal Things Spiritualized (otherwise known as his Book for Boys and Girls) was first published in 1686. Bunyan's little book is a very basic association between text and pictures. By the eighteenth century much more sophisticated emblems were influencing artists and writers; but Bunyan's simple book endured. It was republished many times during Colman's life. For instance, there were London editions in 1793, 1802, 1806, 1820 and 1825.[16] Quarles's book was also being printed in the early nineteenth century; a Bristol edition was produced in 1808, and the Chiswick Press in London brought out a version in 1818.

Emblem books usually consisted of sets of combined visual and verbal messages. A motto or proverb would be illustrated by a woodcut or engraving (in which the symbolic object, or emblem, was predominant) and explained and expanded in verse by the emblem-maker. For example, Emblem Three in an 1818 edition of Quarles's book is drawn from Proverbs 14.13, which reads, 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness'. The Bible text is accompanied by a picture of two juvenile angels playing with a hole in a sphere which rests on a table. Bees fly out of the hole. Quarles explains the emblem in a poem, the second stanza of which reads as follows:

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[16] Praz, p. 291.

> The world's a hive
> From whence thou canst derive
> No good, but what thy soul's vexation brings:
> But case thou meet
> Some petty-petty sweet
> Each drop is guarded with a thousand stings.

This interpretation agrees with Bunyan's lines:

> The bee an emblem truly is of sin,
> Whose sweet unto a many death has been.

In Colman's painting of the fair a beehive can be seen on the right, near the door of the brothel. Probably this establishment is the self-same 'nest of hornets' mentioned by the Revd Smith in his tract.

There is an alternative meaning for the beehive, which Colman may have been aware of. Both the bee and the egg (which also makes its appearance in St James's Fair, and which will be discussed as the second of the three prominent emblems in the picture) were symbols of virginity in medieval times and later, and the hive has often meant Christian watchfulness over purity, as well as industry and forethought. So it is possible that Colman may have placed the beehive on top of the heap of rubbish outside the 'lodgings' to show that virtue had been tossed carelessly aside (like the empty eggshell nearby) and that it was no longer guarded, protected. This interpretation does not lessen the impact of the bawd's 'honey'd words', but enriches the picture.

Bunyan's emblem book provides another suggestion about the significance of the eggshell which can be seen lying near the feet of the busy madam and the young woman who is about to fall prey to her advances. This eggshell must surely have emblematic meaning in St James's Fair, since it adds nothing to the picturesque or topographical value of the painting, apart from underlining the general squalor of the area. Bunyan's 'Meditations upon an Egg' begins:

> The egg's no chick by falling from the hen;
> Nor man a Christian till he's born again.
> The egg's at first contained in the shell;
> Men, afore grace, in sins and darkness dwell.

The eggshell, then, may symbolize, in Colman's iconography, the sin and darkness of St James's Fair; the young girl, by inference, the embryo Christian in danger of still birth.

Intriguingly, eggshells appear in the fantasy-world of Bruegel the Elder - notably in The Land of Cocayne, where they symbolize spiritual emptiness. Hogarth's brilliant visual satires often recall Bruegel's world of contrasting values, making use of his emblematic devices. It seems quite conceivable that Samuel Colman, too, was aware of Bruegel's emblem imagery, through engravings - especially in view of the similarity between Colman's rock formation in St John Preaching and several alpine landscapes by Bruegel. Colman's predilection for transparent figures, laid in over a dark ground, also seems to indicate that the Bristol painter had some experience of looking at Northern European Mannerist paintings; the idea of his admiration for Bruegel is supported by this possiblity. And, having noticed a Bruegelian eggshell in

St James's Fair, one may at least entertain the idea that the extravagant hats, of which quite a show is made in Colman's picture, may have been inspired by the foolish headgear in Bruegel's Pride.[17]

A third emblematic detail in St James's Fair is elaborated verbally in a further stanza of the Quarles poem quoted above in reference to Proverbs 14.13:

> The dainties here,
> Are least what they appear;
> Though sweet in hopes, yet in fruition sour:
> The fruit that's yellow
> Is found not always mellow,
> The finest tulip's not the sweetest flow'r.

These lines, almost to a letter, describe the figure group on the right in Colman's painting. The boy spitting out the sour orange, and the basket of flowers (including a large variegated tulip) have been included by the artist to give emphasis, by their symbolism, to the villainy of the procuress, offering a worthless string of 'dainty' beads to the girl.

To this point, St James's Fair has been presented as a sermon on morality. But, in addition to the symbols which direct the viewer's thoughts to the general pervasiveness of sins such as vanity and greed, deception, wantonness and so forth, there are other, less noticeable, images which the artist has introduced in such a way as to catch the eye of the sensitive member of his 'congregation', and to convey a specifically Dissenting message.

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[17] At least one of the 'hats' appears to have been suggested by one which Colman could have noticed in Bird's Country Auction. Cumberland's catalogue describes the little girl at the mirror as wearing a 'burnished cullender by way of bonnet'. In St James's Fair one of the children admiring the stall at the left is wearing what could be interpreted as a 'cullender'. She is probably the kind of child for whom everything instructional goes 'in one ear and out the other'.

Standing to the left of centre in Colman's fairground scene is a man in a sober black coat and stockings, wearing a wig with a hat perched on its crown and holding two large keys. He appears to be a dignitary of some sort, and it seems likely that he represents the churchwardens of St James's parish. If this is so, he is a 'key figure' in the painting, a metonymical image of the Church of England and a focus of Colman's anti-Church propaganda, as well as one of the villains of the Bristol fair, as described by Revd Smith.

The churchwarden (if so he be) can certainly be identified as a local anti-hero. He stands with his hands behind his back, faces away from the viewer, and appears to smirk at, but to condone the arrangements being made by the couple near him, who are preparing to elope, or who have just done so. It is clear that he is aware of the trespass against the law, for a document entitled 'New Marriage Act' is sticking out of his pocket. Possibly the leer on his face is caused by his understanding that the young people, who are buying a ring from a Jewish trinket-seller, must eventually come to the Church if they are to be married legally. The very presence of an officer of the Church in a place such as this, and strolling comfortably among the wrongdoers, is an affront to the decency of St James's and of the Church in general.

Because every other detail in this picture seems to have been arranged so deliberately, it may not be unreasonable to take note of where Colman has placed his churchwarden. The man stands directly below the big oak tree. Oaks are traditional symbols of Christ, so in a sense the church representative, with his keys which are tokens of Apostolic Succession, is 'in line' with the tree, a descendant of Christ, a claimant of Christ's inheritance. However, between the tree and this 'apostle' stands the auctioneer. Does Colman intend his viewers to learn from this that the parish authorities of St James's have bartered their spiritual inheritance for the rent money which the fair brings to them? E.P. Thompson has pointed out that 'for English radical Dissent in the eighteenth century, the Whore of Babylon was not only the "scarlet woman" of Rome, but all Erastianism, all compromise between things spiritual and the temporal powers of the State'.[18] The comment applies equally to this situation in the 1820s; Colman would have believed that the Church of St James was prostituting itself by its convenient understanding with the organizers of the fair, and by its cheerful use of an ancient law to excuse the existence of the carnival. The churchwarden is certainly no less culpable than the young woman who is being inveigled into becoming a whore. Perhaps as a further comment on the hypocrisy of the Church in Bristol, the church building which is visible in the picture is comfortably distanced from the action of the fair, tucked away among the trees.

The 'New Marriage Act' merits further consideration. This refers to the act of 18 July 1823, entitled 'An Act for amending the Laws respecting the Solemnization of Marriages in England'.[19] The

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[18] The quotation is from Thompson's essay on Blake's 'London' in Interpreting Blake, a selection of essays edited by Michael Phillips (Cambridge, 1978), p. 23.

[19] 4 Cap LXXVI GEORGII IV, to be found in full in A Collection of the Public General Statutes passed in the Fourth Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George the Fourth (London, 1823).

'Oracle of Fashion' had a comment to make on the new legislation in the Mercury:

> New Marriage Act - By Statute, 4, George IV, c. 76, the late obnoxious Marriage Act [Hardwicke's Marriage Act, 1753] is repealed from the 1st day of November next. And it is provided in such Act that the bond heretofore necessary shall be no longer used, by which the sum of 1£ will in future be saved in the expense of the licence. The twenty-eight days' residence formerly required by one or both of the parties, previous to the grant of the licence, is reduced to fifteen days. 20

Although it is true that the legal formalities of marriages were simplified by this new Act of Parliament, the act failed to make provision for the marriage of Dissenters in their own places of worship - which failure would have annoyed people like Colman. Most nonconformists (that is, all except Jews and Quakers) were still bound by law to have their wedding ceremonies conducted by a Church of England clergyman, either after the publication of banns (on three successive Sundays prior to the marriage) or by licence. Those who could afford to do so sometimes circumvented what they believed to be a humiliating situation by going abroad to be married - or simply by living together without contracting a legal marriage. There were also loopholes in the new law which would have been frowned upon by those who regarded the marriage contract as a very sacred undertaking. Although ministers and the couples themselves could be prosecuted and severely punished if they were deemed to have knowingly broken the law in respect to the oaths required before the wedding service, the law left it open to clergymen to overlook many important questions - parental permission, proof of age of those getting married, even the length of residence in the parish by the

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20 6 October 1823, p. 3, col. 5.

parties concerned. Marriages which were carried out by means of breaking of the rules (false declarations of age, for example) were not nullified unless it could be proved that those concerned had knowingly perjured themselves. In other words, the new act of 1823 appeared to be fairer than Hardwicke's Act in terms of the money involved and the length of residence needed in the case of applications for licences; but it did not help Dissenters. And it probably encouraged, rather than inhibited clandestine marriages. All this may help to explain the presence of the 'elopement group' in Colman's St James's Fair.

An attempt was made in 1824 to introduce a Dissenters' Marriage Bill into Parliament. This failed in the House of Lords, and it was not until 1836 (four years after the passing of the Reform Bill) that nonconformist marriages in their own chapels were made possible under the law. The Bristol Mercury[21] again provides us with a useful guide to contemporary views on the 1824 rebuff to Dissenters:

> The result . . . shows that the old sullen spirit of bigotry still lurks in the breasts of some persons in high station, and whose influence proves to be still paramount. It proves . . . that the demon of intolerance and impertinent and anti-christian interference with the religious opinions of others, is not confined to the resuscitated inquisitors of Spain and Portugal . . . If the props of the Church, who opposed the late Bill, have done so from apprehension, they paid we think but a poor compliment to the establishment; if as has been hinted at, it was from a fear of losing the liberal extra fees of the Dissenters, it was both mean and impolitic.

Apart from the New Marriage Act, there are several verbal signs of Colman's political consciousness in St James's Fair. Since these are clues about issues which came to a head a number of years after this particular picture was painted, I shall return to them in Chapter Six, where the political references in Colman's major biblical canvases will be examined. In this present chapter one further symbolic detail remains to be looked at. This is the miniature version of Colman's own painting of St John Preaching in the Wilderness, which I have already introduced (at the end of Section A) as an emblem of the Dissenting preacher, or of field evangelism.

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[21] 10 May 1824, p. 3, col. 3 ('Dissenters' Marriage Bill').

Ostensibly the little picture fits appropriately enough into a fairground scene which includes an auction. However, it is noticeable that the auctioneer's assistant is pointing to the picture with one hand, while, with the other, making a 'hush' signal over his lips. Very few people are paying any attention to the painting, which is recognizable, even in the shade of the tree, as a picture of St John addressing the people in the wilderness. On the frame of this version of Colman's painting there appears a beehive (not present on the actual frame of the painting as it is now). This beehive is apt, because John fed on wild honey while he lived in the wilderness. Since eloquence is among the many attributes traditionally associated with the bee, the hive may also be a deliberate reference to the saint's gifts as a preacher. If so, this is a nice touch of irony, as the picture, with its valuable message, is being auctioned off in an obscure corner, while most people waste time and money on trifles and trickery. The beehive outside the brothel has been tossed away too. Good advice has been abandoned, Colman is saying, and caution thrown to the winds. This is Bristol Fair; no preaching is tolerated here.

On the other hand (using the same kind of alternative analysis as applied to the beehive and the eggshell a little earlier) the inclusion of Colman's own St John Preaching in St James's Fair may have another meaning. It is possible that the artist, represented by his painting, has taken upon himself the role of the prophet, with a duty to 'go into all the world and preach the gospel'.

If this be so, the adoption of the artist/bard relationship would demonstrate that as early as 1824 Samuel Colman held this concept, in common with many another painter of the Romantic era. More intriguingly, it would appear to illustrate certain comments by the Revd Smith in the Bristol Fair tracts. Lamenting the well-known opposition of the churchwardens to open-air preachers, Mr Smith recalls a story he once heard told by Dr Chalmers about a field-preacher touring in Ireland. This man was refused permission to speak in his capacity as a Dissenting minister. He then 'provided himself with a clown's dress, and entering a village with the pomp of a clown, on horseback, collected the people around him and after some amusing observations, proceeded to open his commission, and actually preached to thousands in this way, seated on his horse'.[22] Though relegated to a corner and placed in the shadow beneath the tree and the excursion wheel, the framed picture nevertheless succeeds in bringing the message of the Gospels into the fairground. The painter is speaking, though the preacher has been forced into silence.

St James's Fair is a fascinating product, not only of the current interest in genre painting and in the Hogarthian tradition in English art, but of Samuel Colman's more deeply rooted inheritance of the 'emblem habit', which permitted him to share a number of religious and topical allusions with viewers of his painting. For those furnished with no more than an elementary knowledge of the symbols used by the artist,

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22 Bristol Fair, IV, pp. 58 and 59.

the message of the picture is one of cynicism; but for the viewer fully conversant with Bunyan and Quarles and willing to look closely at the tiny painting near the auctioneer, there is the reward of a very definite promise.

And, though Colman may not have intended to say so, a painting like his St John Preaching could take the message of the preacher from the studio into the wilderness of the saleroom, or of the drawing room to reach people who might never sit at the foot of the pulpit - just as at the fair the careful preacher or lay Christian could hope to have influential contact with folk who would not be attracted to the Church, or welcome within her walls.

Finally, returning to the eggshell, and to Bunyan's verse, we read:

> The egg, when laid, by warmth is made a chicken,
> And Christ, by grace, the dead in sin does quicken.

Samuel Colman is definitely lamenting the sins of Bristol Fair. But he is not without hope that the love and grace of Jesus Christ can be held out - despite the efforts of the Pharisaical churchwardens - to those who find themselves victims of the carnival. All that is needed for the remission of the sins of erring Bristolians is the 'baptism of repentance' called for by that notable field-preacher, John the Baptist.

CHAPTER SIX

Three Political Issues

St James's Fair shows that, by the mid 1820s, Samuel Colman was deeply concerned about political issues. In particular, he was interested in the reform of laws and attitudes which adversely affected Dissenters; and he was clearly of the opinion, as a Dissenter, that the Church was neglecting its pastoral duties, at least in Bristol's parish of St James. The painting seems to be Colman's most important (certainly his most painstaking) secular scene. However, most of the political messages conveyed in his work appear in Colman's pictures of biblical events, or in paintings which are obviously based on Bible texts. This chapter will be about political concerns demonstrated in paintings considered to be the artist's major works: the five large apocalyptic pictures - The Delivery of Israel, Belshazzar's Feast, The Coming of the Messiah and The Destruction of Babylon, The Destruction of the Temple, and The Edge of Doom.

These same paintings will be the focus of further discussion in Chapters Eight and Nine, where their cataclysmic or apocalyptic imagery will be examined in detail. In this chapter, however, they will be under consideration for their many signs of Samuel Colman's involvement with, or alertness to the politics of his own day, and in particular the political issues which were being fought over in the late 1820s and early 1830s, just before, and just following the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832. Here the emphasis of the analysis will not be on the universal upheaval shown in these strange pictures (changes which take place 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump') but on change worked through political processes, and at a more local level.

The three main themes which seem to show themselves in the paintings are: anti-slavery; the 'Catholic Question'; and the reform of Parliament. These topics were of interest and of radical importance to people of widely differing political and religious persuasions. It is safe to say that they would have been much discussed in Bristol and that no one attending either Castle Green Meeting or Zion Chapel could have avoided the debates on these subjects.

At the risk of generalizing dangerously, I shall introduce the three topics by providing a brief historical background to each. Then I shall examine Colman's paintings, showing how each, in turn, exhibits 'political' messages through various visual references.

The 'bondage of corruption' referred to by St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (8.21) was a very familiar metaphor in Samuel Colman's day. As for Paul's original readers, the phrase put people in mind of the long and repeated subjection of the Jews to those who did not serve Jehovah - quite apart from the frequent surrender of God's people everywhere to the powers of Satan. The association is clear enough in St James's Fair, where a notice pinned to the awning of the bookseller's stall reads, 'In the Press: Slavery, A Poem'. It was natural that the negro, sold into literal slavery to satisfy the sinful acquisitiveness of expanding modern nations, should become a symbol of the contemporary moral crisis. Colman's well-heeled gentleman, reading The Racing Calendar, and making 'Bets at [New]market' is obviously the representative at this Babylonish gathering, of those landowners of the 1820s who were poor husbandmen and slaves to horse-racing, while living off the profits made for them by exploited workforces in the West Indies. The Evangelical Christian in Britain at this period was committed like the Prophet Isaiah to the dual responsibility for preaching 'good tidings unto the meek' at home and 'liberty to the captives' overseas - an even more complicated and politically difficult task. Colman seems to be suggesting, in St James's Fair, that many people would rather 'shelve' this responsibility. After all, the pair of globes in the bookstall ('go ye into all the world') is set back out of the way, while trinkets catch the attention of the adults and children nearby.

England entered into the African slave trade early in the second half of the sixteenth century. By the late eighteenth century, when the trade was at its zenith, Liverpool and London were the biggest slave-trading ports, but Bristol developed a major sugar industry which thrived on the importation of raw materials from West Indian plantations. The Pinney family, for example, was famous for its West India trading history. Thus, although slave owning in England was against the law, many Englishmen were owners of slaves, and many Bristolians had a vested interest in this form of cheap labour.[1] Between 1795 and 1804 Bristol ships transported 10,718 slaves from East African ports to the plantations in the Caribbean. Some Bristol merchants, ostensibly disapproving of the trade in slaves, nevertheless bought men and women who had been taken to the West Indies by Liverpool-based ships.

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[1] See C.M. MacInnes, Bristol and the Slave Trade (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, the University of Bristol, 1963). See also W. Matthews, The New History of Bristol, or Complete Guide and Directory for the Year 1793-94, pp. 38-39.
Typically, trade was three-way. Ships laden with firearms and trinkets, and often with cloth, were sent out to West Africa, where the English goods were exchanged for slaves - prisoners of war or captives of unscrupulous marauding bands. If the slaves survived the journey they were in turn sold in the 'Indies' for goods produced in these colonies.

An extract from a letter by John Pinney indicates the attitude towards God's will necessary to a respectable slave-trader: 'Since my Arr^{l} [in Nevis in 1765] I've purch^{d} 9 Negroe Slaves at St. Kitts and can assure you I was shocked at the 1st appearance of hum^{n} flesh expos'd for Sale. But surely God ordained 'em for ye use and benefit of us: other^{se} his Divine Will would have been made manifest by some parti^{r} sign or token'.[2]

On 25 March 1807 slave trading by British merchants was abolished by an Act of Parliament. That a thriving commerce was given up for humanitarian reasons was largely due to the initiative of the Society of Friends and to the tenacity and charisma of Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce.

English Quakers had begun to agitate for an end to the slave trade between Africa and the British colonies as early as 1783. They had received the support of Christians of many denominations. John Wesley was sympathetic to the cause, for instance. Clarkson and Wilberforce were not Quakers, but had strong sympathies with the group; in fact Clarkson wrote a detailed study of the Friends - his famous, best-selling Portraiture of Quakerism (1806). With Clarkson as fact-finder and touring lecturer, and Wilberforce as its representative in the Commons, the campaign against the slave trade was soundly based. It was organized formally on 22 May 1787, as the Society for the Abolition of the Slave

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[2] John Pinney, extract from the Pinney Papers, Business letter-book 1761-75, fol. 67 (University of Bristol). Quoted in MacInnes, p. 14.

Trade. While it took very nearly twenty years of political manoeuvering before the hated trade was finally declared illegal by Parliament, it must be remembered that about four fifths of Britain's overseas trading investments were in the West Indies at the end of the eighteenth century.[3]

At the risk of over-simplifying the story, it may be said that the Abolition Society succeeded in turning the tide of public opinion against the principle of trading in human beings and that, in spite of a powerful lobby in Parliament on behalf of the planters and merchants, right triumphed over might when Wilberforce and Clarkson achieved the passing of their bill in 1807.

Although the slave trade had been put an end to (between Africa and Britain's colonies) the ownership of slaves in these dominions remained to be successfully challenged. Owners and managers of colonial plantations did not see a slave as a 'man and a brother' (as did the members of the Abolition Society) but as an animal on about the same level as an ox - a beast of burden. An educated slave, a Christianized slave, baptized in the faith that 'in Christ Jesus' there is 'neither bond nor free' (Galatians 3.28) would be a danger to the stability and profitability of the plantation, it was considered. Although most missionaries to the West Indies did not have to pay the extreme price exacted of William Smith (who along with others at the time became a martyr to the Abolitionist cause), they often had to contend with actively hostile plantation holders.[4]

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[3] Again see MacInnes, p. 14.

The second phase of the anti-slavery campaign, the move towards negro emancipation, began properly in 1823 with the organization of the Anti-Slavery Society, formally entitled The Society for the Mitigation and Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions. At the request of Wilberforce, Thomas Fowell Buxton accepted parliamentary leadership of the pressure-group. Ten years were to elapse before British colonial slavery was abolished by law. During that period local anti-slavery societies were founded up and down the country. Bristol had such a society (instituted on 10 October 1823 in the presence of no less a visitor than Thomas Clarkson), and it would be satisfying to be able to see Samuel Colman's name among its members. Unfortunately, the records of the society, though they survive in detail, do not include his name.[5] The evidence of the artist's affiliation must again be sought within his paintings.

'To Congregationalists, slavery was pre-eminently a religious question', insists H.R. Martin (p. 27). 'That theme runs through their writings and resolutions. Slavery, in its very essence, was opposed to the principles of Christianity'. It is possible that many of the least politically aggressive Congregationalists would not have interested themselves in the reform of Parliament had they not learned to associate the 'old system' with a conspiracy against freedom which amounted to deliberate banishment of fellow human beings to a life of bondage on earth and to everlasting darkness thereafter, barred from reception into Christ's Kingdom. On a more materialistic level, it was felt that the slave trade had brought Britain ill-fortune and military defeat. A return to prosperity and glory had followed the abolition of traffic in slaves. However, the continued existence of slave ownership in the colonies posed a threat to this good fortune.

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[4] In 1824 William Smith, who was an agent of the London Missionary Society, died in gaol in Georgetown, having been accused by planters of inciting their slaves to rebellion. Not long afterwards, Baptist missionaries found themselves under persecution in Jamaica. See H.R. Martin, 'The Politics of the Congregationalists', p. 27. Martin cites The Patriot of 14 March 1832, pp. 28-29, and of 11 April 1832, p. 60.

[5] See Bristol Auxiliary Anti-Slavery Society, Report of the Proceedings from the formation of the Institution to the 31st December 1830 (Bristol [1831?]). There is a copy in the Avon County Reference Library - B 3218. With it is A List of Donors and Subscribers which includes the names of several men who were Trustees of Zion Chapel.

During the late 1820s and the several years which came between the stepping up of agitation on the part of the Anti-Slavery Society and the realization of its immediate aims in 1833, the journals published or dominated by Congregationalists printed vast numbers of reports and opinion papers about slavery. It is not difficult to find examples of such journalism in the pages of the Congregational Magazine, the Eclectic Review or the Patriot. For example, touching on the point just mentioned, page 188 of the Eclectic Review of March 1831 carried a review of volume two of James Stephen's The Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated (London, 1830). Stephen, it seems, felt with many other people in 1830, that 'strong coincidences seemed to indicate the chastisement of kings and nations for the impious crimes of the slave trade'. He was referring, of course, to the downfall of Charles X of France and to other important political upheavals which had taken place in Europe about the same time.

The Revd Robert Hall was one of the ministers of Bristol who actively supported the campaign against slavery. Hall wrote a pamphlet on the subject in 1824 (presumably while he was still in charge of a congregation in Leicester). According to a memoir by one of his friends, 'A West-Indian proprietor of slaves consequently arraigned Mr. Hall as a wild enthusiast. The reason was sufficiently obvious. Mr. Hall gave it as his opinion that "Slavery introduces the most horrible confusion, since it degrades human beings from the denomination of persons, to that of things . . . We behold these children of nature, for the purpose chiefly of supplying us with the ingredient which sweetens our repasts, compelled by men, who call themselves Christians, to exhaust to its dregs a more bitter cup than is usually allotted to the greatest adepts in crime"'.[6] Keeping in mind that Robert Hall, like his friend John Foster, was a much respected preacher (and an old-school Dissenter) who exchanged pulpits with other ministers, including Mr Leifchild (who was a Congregationalist pastor in Bristol) and had wide contacts through the Bible Society, it is fairly reasonable to suppose that his pamphlet on slavery might have reached the attention of Samuel Colman. Certainly it was the kind of document likely to inform and stir the artist.

Without doubt Colman was aware that his own minister, William Thorp, was a vigorous defender of the Abolitionist cause. A printed record of the Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Meeting held at the Guildhall, Bristol on Thursday, Feb: 2, 1826, quotes at length from the speeches of those who took part in the meeting. Thorp made a characteristically long and passionate speech. He laid the blame for the current situation in the West Indies, not simply on the slave-traders and plantation owners, but on everyone who made use of slaves - merchants, tradesmen, consumers. 'Nineveh herself', he declared, 'had not more cause for "putting on of sackcloth and lying in ashes," than Great Britain has at this moment, under this load of national guilt'.[7]

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[6] Greene, Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. pp. 185-187. See also John Foster, Lectures, second series, (London, 1847), p. 95.

In 1831, on 15 April, Thomas Fowell Buxton proposed a formal resolution in the House of Commons for the Abolition of Slavery. Abolition had become one of the central issues in the Reform Campaign - candidates for Reform going to the polls promising important changes, including the redress of many inequalities and evils, with slavery high on the list of priorities. The actual bill to abolish colonial slavery slipped back out of the limelight for a short time, while the business of passing the Reform Bill occupied electors and parliaments, but the issue was never forgotten. In Yorkshire, for instance, Lord Brougham's success in the 1830 election was guaranteed by the Anti-Slavery Society's support for his candidature. And in 1832 the readers of the Congregational Magazine were urged 'to support only such candidates as are pledged to its [slavery's] immediate and entire abolition'.[8]

On 28 August 1833, the Bill to abolish slavery received the royal assent, although Emancipation Day did not come until the first of August the following year.

Whereas throughout most of the country the Whig party could be depended upon to support the anti-slavery movement, in Bristol there was a 'West India aristocracy' which included many men of traditionally Whig alignment. The local party was split in 1830 during the general electioneering necessitated by the death of George IV. The 'liberal' candidate was Edward Protheroe, Jr, in opposition to James Evan Baillie, another Whig. (There was really no question of opposition to the Tory candidate, Rupert Hart Davis, who was standing for re-election to the other of Bristol's two parliamentary seats. An election card, preserved in the Bristol Record Office, shows him as 'Davis/ The Friend of All/ True Blue. Church and King/ Davis and Loyalty'.[9] In the background is a ship flying a flag marked 'Trade'.) Both Protheroe and Baillie were members of families with trade interests in the West Indies, but Protheroe was open in his condemnation of the practice of slave-owning, while Baillie (or rather his agent, Captain Christopher Claxton, master of a merchant ship from the Pinney Fleet) denounced Protheroe as a hypocrite and stood for the interests of the traders. In the end, after a bitter campaign, Protheroe lost the 1830 election to Baillie. The result was probably an indication of the huge financial resources of the West India merchants. It is interesting to note, however, that funds for the support of Protheroe's candidacy were contributed in generous amounts by abolitionists outside, as well as inside Bristol. Notably, Protheroe was assisted by a donation of £500 from James Cropper and Co. of Liverpool. Further evidence of the national coherence of the Abolitionist campaign in 1830 is the fact that the Birmingham Quaker, Joseph Sturge, was an active worker on behalf of Protheroe.[10]

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[7] See page 25 of the Proceedings cited above. A copy of the pamphlet is kept by the ACRL - B 3217. It was published in Bristol in 1826.

[8] See pp. 694-695 of the 1832 C.M.. See also the Patriot, 18 July 1832, p. 209.

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[9] The card is illustrated opposite p. 16 in Peter Marshall's booklet, Bristol and the Abolition of Slavery (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, The University of Bristol, 1975).

In spite of his defeat, Protheroe did not give up his public affiliation with the movement for Negro Emancipation. On 11 January 1831, for instance, the Bristol Mercury printed a letter from Protheroe, addressed to the electorate of the city. 'If I ever appear again on your hustings', he wrote, 'if I ever speak your sentiments in a Parliament, reformed or unreformed, my voice will still be lifted for the abolition of every vestige of religious intolerance, for the improved treatment and early emancipation of the enslaved African, and as leading to these and all desirable reformations in Church and State, for a complete reform in the representation of the people in Parliament' (p. 3, col. 4). From this stage, however, the rhetoric of Protheroe, and of very many of his fellow Abolitionists in the political world, fused the rights of the black man in the Caribbean (to freedom from bondage) and the rights of the British elector (to greater political clout, freedom from a number of economic and social restrictions) and the 1831 election was fought over Reform at home, not Slavery overseas. Curiously, this emphasis on Parliamentary Reform allowed the breach in the ranks of the Whigs to be closed. Baillie and Protheroe now campaigned together (in the absence of Claxton, however) and swept the polls, to enjoy a brief period of office as Bristol's MPs before yet another election divided them again, and Protheroe went out of office. In spite of this the Anti-Slavery cause triumphed, as we have seen; and prayers of thanksgiving were offered in

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[10] Marshall, pp. 13 and 15.

Bristol's chapels on the first of August 1834, which was the official day of the termination of colonial slavery.[11]

An account of the Abolistionist campaign in Bristol would not be complete (in the context of this probe into the life of Samuel Colman) without mention of the fact that the chairman of the committee to assist Protheroe in his 1830 election campaign was John Hare, Jr, who has already been mentioned as the son of John Hare, founder of Zion Chapel, and as an art collector. He was one of the Trustees of Zion Chapel, and it is of interest that among the signatories to the Protheroe nomination in 1830 there were six of Hare's fellow trustees, besides his father and his brother Charles (who later served on the City Council as a Conservative).[12] Hannah More was also among those who signed the nomination; and a letter to Hare from Protheroe makes it seem likely that Hare went with Protheroe to secure Mrs More's signature.[13]

Clearly, Hare's position as Chairman of Protheroe's election committee was not a nominal post. His public stance as an Abolitionist brought him a rather less than veiled challenge to a duel from Captain Claxton and threats of murder from a gang of hooligans who attacked

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[11] See Bristol Mercury, 26 July 1834, p. 3, col. 1.

[12] Hare Manuscripts, Bristol Record Office. MSS 8033, 1-20 apply to the election, and the list of signatories is 8033/4. See also the Zion Chapel Minute Book, p. 47, for the list of Trustees. Those who appear in both lists are: Richard Ash (a prominent Bristolian who advanced Dissenters' and philanthropic interests in the city for many years until his death in 1866 at the age of 85); Robert Leonard (son-in-law of John Hare, Sr - his daughter married Revd David Thomas, who became minister of Zion Chapel in 1836); John Godwin (who was a Deacon at Zion); W.D. Wills (of the tobacco company); Frederick Wills (another member of the same family); and Edward Goss.

[13] Bristol Record Office - 8033/14.

Protheroe's headquarters. At the Hare floorcloth factory there was also trouble during Baillie's processional entry into the city. And on 30 July 1830, just before the election, Hare was standing next to the candidate when Protheroe was injured by a piece of wood which was hurled at him by a supporter of the other side.[14] At a Reform Dinner held in May 1831 to celebrate the fragile success in the election just then won by Protheroe and Baillie, John Hare, Jr, was toasted for his 'sacrifices in the cause'.[15] So, all in all, it appears that in John Hare Zion Chapel, and Samuel Colman, had definite connections with the dynamic political activity within the Congregationalist church as a whole during this interesting and formative period in the life of the country.

From the newspapers of the late 1820s (and beyond) and from the pamphlets published at the time it is not difficult to see that the Bristol public in those years were treated (with some relish) to full accounts of the long controversy which may be said to have 'raged' there, just as it did all over Britain, about what has been called 'The Catholic Question'. Samuel Colman's position on the Abolition of Slavery is not in doubt. But on the 'Catholic Question' his known associations and his paintings are much more puzzling. Therefore the background information available is critical to successful, or even plausible interpretation of what certainly appear to be anti-Catholic statements in Colman's pictures.

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[14] See Marshall, pp. 8-11 and also the Bristol Mercury, 10 August 1830, p. 2, col. 3. See also the Hare MSS - 8033/5 and 8033/11(f).

[15] Bristol Mercury, 17 May 1831, p. 3, cols 2-4.

In 1823, the year in which the Anti-Slavery Society was founded, Daniel O'Connell revived the Catholic Association. Although this organization was not absolutely united in its aims, it proved to be a very strong lobby for Roman Catholic claims to emancipation from civil and political restraints. In fact O'Connell and his supporters were regarded with such respect by the British government that the Catholic Relief Bill was passed in 1829, four years before the Anti-Slavery Bill achieved similar success.

In brief, the events leading up to Catholic Emancipation were these. Like Protestant nonconformists in the 1820s, Roman Catholics in Britain were barred, as Dissenters, from taking part in municipal or national government because the Test Act of 1673 required of them the swearing of oaths which conscientiously they could not declare. There were other 'disabilities', some shared with Protestant Dissenters (like the laws involving marriage and the registration of births), some specific to Catholics (restrictions on the activities of the clergy, for example). Many wealthy Catholics were able, like their Protestant counterparts, to hold positions of considerable power and influence, by using money - and caution - to advantage in their professional careers or in the administration of their land and the privileges that went with that land. For example, some Catholic families had at their disposal the nomination to Parliament of members for 'rotten' boroughs within the boundaries of their estates.[16] The demands made by Roman Catholics were made most often by those more 'aggrieved' than the gentry; and, as in the case of

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[16] For further details of the situation see J. Derek Holmes, More Roman than Rome: English Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1978), pp. 28-30.

Protestant claims, the voices raised on behalf of Catholics were those loud enough to carry above the general clamour of cities and industry. They were the voices of middle class people fully aware of grievances for the first time, or of the leaders of the industrial poor. Like Protestants in the same kind of situation, the active Roman Catholic claimants to Emancipation campaigned vigorously in the journals of the day. The Truthteller was a magazine given the backing of the Catholic Association in Ireland, which Association also published its own tracts. The Association bought advertising space in The Edinburgh Review and The Quarterly Review. Through the Association, too, Catholics were able to lobby members of Parliament known to support their interests.

Catholic Emancipation had been pressed in Parliament for many years. In 1813 a Relief Act had been defeated by the Speaker's vote, and bills and proposals of 1817, 1819, 1823 and 1827 had also suffered narrrow defeats. In 1828 Protestant Dissenters succeeded in winning relief from the restrictions placed upon them by the Test and Corporation Acts. Encouraged by this evidence of a relatively liberal attitude in the government, Catholics again pressed their own claims. The Catholic Association used the election campaign of 1828 to force the Tories, under Wellington and Peel, to accede to their demands. (The election had been occasioned by the resignation of various government ministers.) Only those candidates in opposition to the government were given backing by the Association, and in County Clare Daniel O'Connell himself stood for appointment as a member. When he was elected, by a majority of a third of the votes, his unconstitutional position as a Catholic representative of a large number of Irish voters put Wellington and his party in an embarrassing position. The alarming prospect of further similarly rebellious elections in Ireland, and even of the formation of an Irish Parliament in opposition to the Westminster Government, loomed large. Wellington and Peel capitulated, with the result that their Catholic Relief Bill became law on the thirteenth of April 1829.

Roman Catholic Relief was thus achieved by a reluctant Tory Government and a reluctant king. George IV, like his father before him, was of the belief that the emancipation of Roman Catholics would be tantamount to breaking the royal Coronation Oath, which pledged the Monarch to uphold a Protestant constitution. George III had stubbornly refused to assist William Pitt when that statesman made a rather premature gesture in the direction of emancipation for Catholics - an apparent promise of relief as a natural outcome of the 1800 Act of Union. George IV was not so immovable, and the Catholic Relief Bill of 1829 received his sign and seal.

The accomplishment of Catholic Emancipation was an act of political expediency - not of humanitarianism or of justice. The nature and necessity of the Act had been recognized for some years as part and parcel of the Irish Question. Sydney Smith, for example, wrote in 1807 or 1808:

> Whatever your opinion may be of the follies of the Roman Catholic Religion, remember they are the follies of four millions of human beings, increasing rapidly in numbers, wealth and intelligence, who, if firmly united to this country, would set at defiance the power of France, and if once wrested from their allegiance with England, would in three years render its existence as an independent nation absolutely impossible. 17

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17 'Peter Plymley', Letters on the Subject of the Catholics, to my brother Abraham, who lives in the Country (London, 1807-8), second letter, p. 23. Quoted in Holmes, p. 26.

Not everyone shared this view. G.I.T. Machin remarked, in a study of the 'Catholic Question' published some years ago that 'Enthusiasm often generates intolerance, and the products of the eighteenth-century religious revival were largely anti-Catholic'. Older nonconformist groups, he considered, were not usually so consistently opposed to the prospect of Catholic Relief: 'Many of their ministers petitioned for emancipation, largely as a quid pro quo for help given by pro-Catholics towards the relief of dissenters. But the pro-Catholic inclinations of dissenting ministers certainly did not extend to their flocks'.[18]

As might be expected, clergymen in the Church of England were predominantly opposed to Emancipation, and prominent Anglican laymen were often leading lights in Brunswick Clubs and other societies which resisted the proposed change in the law. All told, the evidence goes to show that among Churchmen and Dissenters, archbishops and apprentices, respectable Orthodox Independents and religious extremists - all might be equally ready to speak out against Catholic Emancipation. There were no devastating mob uprisings on the scale of the 'No Popery' riots instigated by Lord George Gordon in 1780; but there were popular demonstrations and assemblies, with much speechifying, and a paper war of considerable proportions (which often indicates just how complex and confused the situation was).

The Letters to William Wilberforce, Esq., M.P., by 'Amicus Protestans' claimed to demonstrate 'Inconsistency of a Protestant Christian, and the impolicy of a British Legislator, in advocating the

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[18] The Catholic Question in English Politics, 1820 to 1830 (Oxford, 1964), p. 7.

Roman Catholic claims'.[19] Letter XIX worries about the fact that 'a majority of the Dissenters' support emancipation for Catholics. Referring to the famous Bible commentator and Independent, the writer says that Matthew Henry 'would have dissented from modern Dissenters and been too much of a Protestant to wish to see Roman Catholics in the exercise of Legislative, Judicial and Executive Power among Protestants'. The very idea that Catholics can now be trusted with power in government, he continues, is 'about as accurate a conclusion as to argue that the wild inhabitants of the Menagerie, may be suffered to go at large, because their long repose during confinement, has sufficiently shewn them to have undergone a change of nature and dispositions'.

These words echo, in more extreme language, perhaps, the Reasons Against Emancipation for Roman Catholics expressed by the Right Reverend Dr. Beilby Porteus (late Bishop of London) in a pamphlet published in 1812.[20] The Church of Rome, claims Dr. Porteus, adheres to doctrines 'hostile, not only to the Protestant religion, but to a Protestant Government. It has been said, indeed, that these are not now the tenets of the Church of Rome; that they may be found perhaps "in some old musty records"', but, insists the Bishop, decrees insisting on Roman Catholic obedience to the Pope 'have never been renounced or disavowed' but have been republished frequently and stand as a threat to Protestant administrations.

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[19] These letters were published in London by Simpkin and Marshall in 1822. The quotations which follow are from pages 64-65 and 66 and 67.

[20] The quotation comes from pages 5 and 6 of the pamphlet.

Dissenters were usually considered by average Church-goers to be in favour of Catholic emancipation. Those people who were opposed on general principle to emancipation used the subject as fuel on their fires of contempt for Dissenters.

> When political agitation swept in a great current through the country [wrote George Eliot in retrospect] Treby Magna was prepared to vibrate. The Catholic Emancipation Bill opened the eyes of neighbours, and made them aware how very injurious they were to each other and to the welfare of mankind generally. Mr. Tiliot, the church spirit-merchant, knew now that Mr. Nuttwood, the obliging grocer, was one of those Dissenters, Deists, Socinians, Papists and Radicals, who were in league to destroy the Constitution . . . The Dissenters, on their side . . . defended themselves from the charge of religious indifference, and solemnly disclaimed any lax expectations that Catholics were likely to be saved - urging, on the contrary, that they were not too hopeful about Protestants, who adhered to a bloated and worldly prelacy. 21

However, it is clear that on this matter, as on the subject of the Reform Bill and of the 'Prophetical Controversy', nonconformists were divided, and debated Catholic Relief in their periodicals and in their pulpits.

In Chapter Four I have already mentioned a notable Dissenter who voiced confident opinions against Catholic Emancipation: Edward Irving (1792-1834). This magnetic native of Annan, Dumfries-shire, was, for most of his brief career as an evangelist, the minister of the Caledonian Chapel, London, first in Hatton Garden, and later in a fine new church in Regent Square. Irving was the intimate friend of Thomas Carlyle, and pupil and assistant of the celebrated Dr. Thomas Chalmers; and in London he was also the acquaintance of such diverse personalities

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21 Geroge Eliot, Felix Holt, The Radical, Penguin edition (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 127. The novel was first published in 1866.

as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mrs. Basil Montagu, and Henry Crabb Robinson. Irving was impressive in appearance, being tall and dark, with an interesting (and symbolic?) squint in one eye. In spite of a fondness for seventeenth-century syntax and vocabulary and for loosely constructed and lengthy discourses modelled on those of Puritan divines, Irving became a sensationally popular preacher, attracting the attention of almost everyone who was anyone in London from 1822 to at least 1827. He was caught up in the excitement over the interpretation of prophecy which occupied many minds in the Church of England and numerous students in other denominations. He was also involved in a long controversy because of the 'speaking in tongues' by some members of his congregation and because of his own writings on such 'spiritual gifts'. And, as already stated, his views on the human nature of Jesus Christ were considered heretical by his seniors in the Church of Scotland. Eventually he was forced out of his London church and disfellowshipped after trial by the Annan Presbytery in 1833. He then became an Angel or Pastor of the group which became known as the Catholic Apostolic Church; and within this organization he was able to continue to preach his pentecostal theology for just over a year and a half, before his death in December, 1834.[22] For present purposes the importance of Irving lies in his tremendous popularity. Huge audiences heard him preach from his Hatton Garden pulpit. These congregations included noblemen and notables of the day - Brougham, Canning, Lord Liverpool, Wilberforce, Bentham, Coleridge, Macaulay, Hazlitt. The rich and the complacent were chided by the preacher, but even those who most seriously disagreed with what he was saying found themselves fascinated by his romantic appearance and extravagant, stagy rhetoric, which managed to combine insults with a sincere promise of Christian hope.

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[22] For the full story see Andrew L. Drummond, Edward Irving and his Circle (London, 1934). See also Gordon Strachan, The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving (London, 1973).

Increasingly, in sermons and writings, Irving placed emphasis on Judgement and on the 'Plan of the Apocalypse' (as he entitled one of his sermons).[23] Like others of his day, but more outspokenly, more publicly, Irving declared the Papacy to be the seven-headed, ten-horned dragon which John had seen while in vision on Patmos.[24] He warned that retribution awaited those nations and individuals wooed from Christ by the 'Spirit of Infidelity'. He said his purpose was to inform his audiences so that they could 'watch against the evil spirits of Antichrist'. Irving saw the religious leaders among his contemporaries as (most of them) balefully weak, and denounced the Government for its support of Church patronage, while in the same breath dismissing Dissenters as 'too full of political grievances'. Any gesture towards Catholic Emancipation, of course, was a sign of the very worst corruption, and Irving did not fail to predict a miserable outcome for the 'proud expediency' he saw about to come to pass. The most notorious of his diatribes against the Papacy and everything under its influence was an address delivered to the

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[23] This sermon is included (with 29 other sermons and five lectures) in a volume by William Jones called Biographical Sketch of the Rev. Edward Irving, A.M. (London, 1835).

[24] Irving interpreted the 1260 days mentioned in John's vision as 1260 years extending from 533 A.D. - when the Papacy was given power by the Emperor Justinian - to 1793 - when the French Revolutionary government abandoned Roman Catholicism. This, of course, was one among a number of opinions on the mysterious number circulating at the time Irving was preaching in London.

Continental Missionary Association (or Continental Society) in 1825 and later published as Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed. He wrote:

> Though it expose me to odium in every form, I have no hesitation in asserting it to be my belief that, when the rulers of this nation shall permit, to the worshippers of the Beast, the same honours, immunities and trust, which they permit to the worshippers of the true God, that day will be the blackest in the history of our fate. That day our national charter is forfeited in heaven, and we are sealed no longer. 25

This kind of energetic utterance was not really taken seriously by the august congregations to whom Irving spoke.

> Irving, unfortunately, was too much of a rhetorician [comments Andrew Drummond]. As social censor he was too lurid, too personal in his onslaughts. His disparagement of his own age was too dramatic to ring true. His style was too affected and archaic to persuade. He was a preacher for those who loved a good sermon rather than for those who needed a good religion. The effect of his preaching was to leave men dazzled and stupefied rather than convinced or converted; they went home wondering at the power of the orator, rather than mourning over their besetting sins and striving after amendment. 26

Those who attempted to take Irving seriously were often disappointed. Among these was the Revd Robert Hall of Bristol, himself a noted Baptist preacher, who considered Irving's harsh denunciations to be in 'bad taste'.[27]

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25 The lecture was first published in 1826. This paragraph is quoted in Jones, Biographical Sketch, p. 173. Irving went on to suggest that the solution to the claims of the Irish could be found in adequate provision for evangelists in the Church of Ireland.

26 Edward Irving and his Circle, p. 57.

27 Greene, Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, p. 130.

In sharp contrast to Edward Irving's outlook was the positive attitude to Catholic Emancipation taken by Dr Thomas Chalmers. In a speech delivered early in 1829 to an Edinburgh audience Chalmers made his point of view quite clear: 'We are not Pro-Catholic. We are not hostile, neither are we indifferent to the holy cause of Protestantism'. Arguing that Catholic 'disabilities' in Ireland had actually strengthened the Catholic cause, he went on: 'They have transformed a nation of heretics into a nation of heroes' and consequently 'the cause of truth has gone backward'. 'If to strengthen the cause of truth', he said, 'you put the forces of the statute book under her command, there instantly starts up on the side of falsehood an auxiliary far more formidable'. Chalmers proposed a solution to the problem - a complete separation of the forces of law and religion; and as a peroration he made a confident claim on behalf of the Word of God:

> Give Catholics of Ireland their emancipation; give them a seat in the Parliament of their country; give them a free and equal participation in the politics of the realm; give them a place on the right ear of Majesty, and a voice in his counsels; and give me the circulation of the Bible, and with this mighty engine I will overthrow the tyranny of Anti-Christ, and establish the fair and original form of Christianity on its ruins. 28

John Foster of Stapleton shared Chalmers's outlook: 'If I had to preface a vote in the house with a sentence or two', he wrote to John Easthope, M.P., 'it would be to this effect: "I would urge this measure most earnestly; not that I can profess to feel this demand strongly

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28 The Speech Delivered by the Rev. Dr. Chalmers (minister of the Established Kirk of Scotland) At A Meeting Held in Edinburgh, March 14, 1829, on the Subject of the Roman Catholic Claims (Southampton, 1829), pp. 4, 5 and 8.

grounded on a strict claim of right; for I believe there is essentially and inseparably in popery something of a deadly tendency to the welfare of a state. That point, however, I deem not worth debating in the present case, where the measure comes with such an overpowering claim of policy, of expediency, of utility. Without adopting this measure, you absolutely can never tranquillize the people of Ireland"'.[29] He goes on to scoff at the idea that Roman Catholicism could present a danger to the State, faced as it was by 'the almost miraculous diffusion of the Bible . . . with the settled, deep, and general prejudice against popery into the bargain - and the wealth, power, rank and influence, nine-tenth part of them, on the side of protestantism'.

Revd Foster was a well-known Baptist, for many years a contributor to the Eclectic Review. Dr Chalmers was of course at this period a leading minister in the Church of Scotland and, like Edward Irving - at the opposite pole of opinion on Catholic Relief, a very popular speaker in churches of various denominational affiliations, up and down the length of Britain. The division of opinion among Congregationalists over the Catholic Emancipation Bill is expressed in the pages of the Congregational Magazine of June, 1833, by the writer of the obituary for the Revd William Thorp of Castle Green who had died the previous month:

> Mr Thorpe, it is well known, belonged to that very small class who unite the characters of Dissenting Minister and High Tory. We know not to what circumstances Mr Thorpe's first bias to this style of politics, of which he was such a staunch advocate, was owing; but there can be no doubt that his prejudices increased with his years, till at last he was led

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[29] Ryland, Life and Correspondence of John Foster, II, pp. 131-132.

> to take the most gloomy and foreboding views of the policy and the destinies of our country. . . The strong antipathies he felt to popery led him to manifest the most determined hostility to the measures for Catholic relief, in all their stages. 30

This picture of Thorp as a prophet of doom is exaggerated; his own published writings leave one with a more positive impression of the man. His fears, and his optimism (which I shall return to in Section D) were shared with his congregation in lectures apparently delivered at some stage between the summer of 1830 and their publication in the spring of the following year.[31] Inaccuracy apart, however, it is interesting to note that the obituary writer in the Congregational Magazine goes on to remark that Mr Thorp's extreme anti-Catholicism must have been very sincere and deeply felt since he found himself 'standing quite apart alone and acting in opposition to the known opinions and feelings of his nearest connections and friends'.

As far back as 1813 Thorp published a pamphlet arguing his case against Catholic Emancipation. Another tract appeared in 1829. Thorp had again entered the 'paper war'. His pamphlet is similar to

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30 The obituary covers pages 321-331. The quotation is taken from pp. 330 and 331.

31 The lectures are those published as a volume entitled, The Destinies of the British Empire and the Duties of British Christians at the Present Crisis (London, 1831). A very brief 'notice' of the book appears on p. 446 of the Eclectic Review, Third Series, V (May 1831): 'We thank Mr Thorp for his title: it will give us a fitting text to a few remarks little in unison, we must confess, with his lugubrious vaticinations'.

others of the period.[32] It would not necessarily warrant quotation were it not for the fact that it expresses the views of a man who was Samuel Colman's church pastor for a number of years - possibly even from the time Colman moved from Yeovil to Bristol with his wife (about 1816) until Thorp became housebound late in 1832.[33]

Revd Thorp had taken part in a huge protest rally on 12 February 1829 in Queen Square, Bristol. The meeting had been attended by 12,000, perhaps even 15,000 people, and the minister had hoped to have an open-air debate on the 'Catholic Question' with another Independent pastor, Revd Leifchild. As things turned out, the contest was not held, but if it had taken place, the site of battle would have been the foot of the statue of William III - King Billy - for which symbol of the British Constitution Thorp would have stood champion. The published pamphlet, entitled England's Liberties Defended, is filled with the rhetoric of an address to the People.

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[32] The full title of Thorp's tract is England's Liberties Defended: The Substance of a Second Speech after an interval of 16 years, intended to have been delivered at a Meeting Convened in Queen-Square in the City of Bristol, For the Purpose of taking into Consideration the Expediency of presenting a Petition to Parliament against the Claims of the Roman Catholics (Bristol, 1829). Soon after the publication of this document, Thorp was accused of plagiarism by a columnist of the Bristol Mercury (31 March 1829, p. 3, col. 3). The newspaper writer demonstrated by means of quotations that Thorp had 'borrowed' at considerable length from a work called Lectures on the Principles and Institutions of the Roman Catholic Religion by the Revd Joseph Fletcher (published in 1817). This self-same Revd Fletcher later preached Thorp's funeral sermon - in which he did not accuse his friend of plagiarism. The sermon was published as The Funeral Sermon on the Death of the Rev. W. Thorp (London, 1833). The explanation of the matter seems to lie in the fact that Thorp had a photographic memory (Fletcher and others praised it) but found it difficult to distinguish between material of his own composition and the writings or speeches of other people. England's Liberties Defended is also remarkably similar in wording to the published text of a speech by the Revd George Townsend, Prebendary of Durham and Vicar of Northallerton: Obedience to the Laws of the Church of Rome, incompatible with the power of legislating for Protestants (London, 1829).

[33] See Chapter One.

Thorp introduces his subject with a quotation from Proverbs 24.21: 'My son, fear the Lord and the King; and join [the King James version has 'meddle'] not with them that are given to change'. He then tells his readers that the admission of Roman Catholics to positions of power within the British Government would be a mockery of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when a hereditary right to the throne was 'superseded by the elective right, or the choice of the people. The entire exclusion of Roman Catholics from the Government is, therefore, the qualification of the Brunswick sovereignty' whose 'best safety consists in their faithfully fulfilling the conditions of their compact with the people of England'. He continues:

> I am a Christian, a firm believer in divine revelation, and therefore in the prophetic part of that revelation. What I am going to say will probably excite the sneer of the superficial Infidel and draw down the vituperation of the blaspheming Atheist. But I am bold to say that the Church of Rome bears upon her brow the brand of divine vengeance; that she must fall; and that all the secular kingdoms in alliance with her will fall when she falls, in one vast and simultaneous ruin; and that the only security for our beloved country amidst the wreck of nations, will be her Protestantism.

In another vivid passage, he says, 'My countrymen, two great national calamities have happened in one week. York Minster, the glory of British architecture, burnt down, it is said by a Protestant madman, and a brand applied to the British Constitution, justly styled the admiration of the world, by the trembling hand of Wellington, pushed on by the violence of Popish demagogues and atheistical fanatics' (p. 14). Here, of course, Thorp is referring to the attempt made by Jonathan Martin, brother of the painter, to destroy York Minster on the night of 1 February 1829.[34] Thorp's mention of someone whose activism in the anti-'popish' cause was so much more extreme than his own certainly helps to tone down the portrait of the Bristol minister. He was of strong views, he was bold in speaking out his beliefs, and it is also easy to see why some of his contemporaries thought him bigoted; but he was no fanatic.

After Catholic Emancipation was a *fait accompli* Thorp continued to take a public stand against Roman Catholicism. Notably, he was one of several Bristol ministers who took part in debates about the doctrines of the Church of Rome during meetings held in Bristol's King Street (Wesleyan) and Castle Green Chapels on 25, 26 and 27 August 1829.[35]

Still later, in 1831, Mr Thorp published in the form of a volume entitled *The Destinies of the British Empire and the Duties of British Christians at the Present Crisis* a series of lectures evidently given in the interval since the downfall of Charles X of France (as Thorp's comments make clear in the book). Thorp obviously felt compelled by his disappointment over the passage of the Catholic Relief Bill to deliver these sermons, which are reiterations of his earlier warnings about the dangers of association with Catholicism in any form, and attempts to bring individuals and (if at all possible) the British nation to repentance and a decision to sever 'the fatal chain that links her destiny to that of the papal empire' (p. 220).

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[34] See Thomas Balston, *The Life of Jonathan Martin, with some account of William and Richard Martin* (London, 1945).

[35] See the pamphlet, *Substance of the Controversy Between Mr. Gordon, Mr. Finch, The Rev. W. Thorp, and The Rev. John Burke, Roman Catholic Minister of Newport, on The Christian Rule of Faith, and the Idolatrous Worship of The Church of Rome* (Bristol, 1829).

William Thorp was labelled as an unusual theologian when his life came to be examined in the Congregational Magazine. Allowably, Samuel Colman was also unusual among nonconformists by the very circumstance of his being an artist. My present business is to try to ascertain the extent of his oddness or uniqueness; and although it may be unfair to attempt to become acquainted with Colman's beliefs by speculating on the known opinions of his spiritual mentor, the invitation to do so appears to warrant acceptance if only because Colman did not leave a 'calling card' of similar size.

Did Samuel Colman share the views of his minister? Thorp certainly argued in his pamphlet (p. 32) that 'the Dissenters in general disowned' those among their number who were in favour of liberal changes, including Catholic Relief. It should also be remembered that, according to Latimer's Annals (p. 129), 'many Dissenters, whilst exulting that their own rights of conscience had just been secured by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, showed an eagerness to maintain the fetters on Roman Catholics. Mr. Bright, the Whig and nonconformist member for Bristol, voted against the Bill'. The local mob went so far as to do damage to a Roman Catholic chapel in Trenchard Street and to the homes of some Catholic citizens.

Ought one, then, to discount the opinion of the obituary writer and claim for Revd Thorp a supporter from within his congregation who was close enough to him philosophically to paint 'illustrations' of his sermons? The question is important, because a conclusion that Samuel Colman was against Catholic Emancipation (although his five major apocalyptic pictures were almost certainly all carried out after the date of the Catholic Relief Act) would tempt a student of his life and work to infer that the artist was also a political reactionary in a more general sense. And such a conclusion would tend to weigh the balance of opinion about Colman's entire outlook on the side of the view that he was a 'millenarian crank' (which is how Edward Irving is often branded). This conclusion would be the easy option, not only because Colman's paintings appear naive and therefore likely to be eccentric in content, but because the belief that normal Dissenters in the 1820s and 1830s were 'liberal' or 'radical' rather than conservative is hard to dispel in spite of all the evidence to demonstrate the variety of their opinions. Members of the Church of England of the same period are expected to have been conservative, and radical politics are demanded of most nonconformists.

Even a cursory examination of Colman's major religious paintings brings to one's attention details which point strongly to his anti-Catholic views. It is my thesis, however, that Colman was 'anti-Popery' rather than against political equality for Roman Catholics. He may well have shared with Thorp and with Irving (whose work Thorp admired) a pleasure in studying Bible prophecy and applying it to the Roman Church, but he seems likely to have stopped short of the reactionary fervour adopted by the minister and by the excitable rabble who came to the kind of meeting convened in Queen Square in February 1829. I do not draw this conclusion simply from the evidence in Colman's paintings that he was an advocate of the same sort of changes sought by most evangelicals - the abolition of slavery, the control of fairs by responsible authorities, the preaching of 'glad tidings of great joy' to the poor - for these were certainly matters on which Revd Thorp and Edward Irving would have been in agreement with 'liberal' Dissenters. Much more decisive are the visual clues in St James's Fair which suggest Colman's sympathy with political reforms in favour of Dissenters. These encourage one to interpret more ambiguous imagery in the later paintings as 'political' or 'reform' symbolism. More important still, the idea of Samuel Colman as a reformer also fits comfortably into the known fact of his having joined the congregation established in Bedminster by John Hare, who was a well-known liberal and whose leading associates - his Trustees, his fellow Deacon, and (as we shall see) the first pastor of the church - were all interested in politics.

'Amicus Protestans' was probably correct in saying that Matthew Henry would have opposed Roman Catholic Emancipation. Undoubtedly the same would have been true of John Bunyan and of many other seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century writers on the reading list of thinking nonconformists in the early years of the nineteenth century. Times had changed, however. A judicious extension of political freedom for Catholics was seen as right and proper and certainly expedient by people whose Calvinism was now 'evangelical' rather than 'high' - though still informed and enriched by Bunyan and Matthew Henry. Looked at in this light, the construction of Samuel Colman as an evangelical Congregationalist remains thus far intact.

In 1844 Benjamin Disraeli looked back at the events which immediately preceded the passing of the Reform Bill and at the twelve years which had followed that momentous day. From the vantage point of novelist and politician, he was able to assess the 'condition of England' and to explain through the voices of his main characters in Coningsby his own ideals for a democratic society. He criticized the Reform Act pushed through Parliament by a Whig aristocracy which had achieved a reorganization of the voting procedures of the country with the intention of staving off popular rebellion but which had destroyed the power of the House of Lords in the attempt and given the vote to those equipped by fortune to pay for it - thus creating a middle class oligarchy. 'The ten pound franchise', he wrote, 'was an arbitrary, irrational, and impolitic qualification . . . Its immediate and inevitable result was Chartism'.[36]

Disraeli was interested in the political dilemmas posed by the current changes in the social classes due to the Industrial Revolution. Ethnically a stranger, he entered with romantic enthusiasm into the development of a 'party with principles' essentially English. It is interesting to see how Disraeli's view of democracy differs from that of other people who were conscientiously political at the time.

Unlike Disraeli, Dissenters were quite pragmatic about politics. They entered into political debate - became members of associations, edited journals, led deputations, supported candidates - because they felt such involvement to be necessary in order to put right particular wrongs affecting nonconformists (although there were also other causes very dear to them such as anti-slavery). As I have suggested above, there were Dissenters, including Congregationalists, who felt that political activity was sinful, or at the very least unbecoming to ministers of God's church. Yet others campaigned vigorously and over long periods of time for the redress of the politically alterable 'grievances' felt by Dissenters. From the Reform Act and the consequently reformed Parliament, Dissenters generally hoped for a number of changes. These included a big improvement in the voting power of Dissenters with the extension of the franchise and the reorganization of the constituencies to take the new industrial towns into account; a speedy passage of an act for the emancipation of slaves in Britain's colonies; favourable alterations to the marriage laws and to the statutes affecting baptism and burial; admission for Dissenters to the universities in England; and radical changes in the system for the collection of Church Rates. During the 1820s and the 1830s a growing number of Dissenters also considered the possibility of the disestablishment of the Church of England.

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[36] Coningsby (London, 1911), p. 31. I used a 1971 reprint of the 1911 edition. The novel was first published in 1844.

'Political Dissent' appears to have been most active in the north of England. But while it coincides, geographically, with the growth of a 'politics of the people' in the large towns, the general tone of even the most radical of the Congregationalist, Baptist or Unitarian agitators is not populist, but nonconformist. It fits in with the pattern of the growth from the Evangelical Revival and onwards, of middle-class interests and middle-class respectability within Old Dissent. With 1828 came the legal right for nonconformists to enter into positions of responsibility in local government and in Parliament. The way was opened for an expansion of the Dissenting lobby at Westminster, and in the picture of the politics of 1831 and 1832 it is easiest to isolate the middle class northern industrialist or entrepreneur as the Dissenter with the most at stake during the Reform Crisis.

Edward Baines of Leeds is a case in point. He was a journalist with long-standing radical sympathies who became editor-proprietor of the Leeds Mercury and a figure of tremendous political 'clout' in Yorkshire. In 1830 he was instrumental in winning for Brougham election to the parliamentary seat for the county, and from 1834-41 he himself represented Leeds at Westminster. And, although he came of Anglican forbears, Edward Baines married a nonconformist, worshipped with her for many years at Salem Congregational Church in Leeds, and eventually joined that church in 1840.

It should be remembered, however, that industrial England was not confined entirely to the North. It also included such cities as Bristol. It should be kept in mind too that (with what Disraeli would have considered a naive respect for the aristocracy) many nonconformists looked to a number of prominent Whig leaders with confidence in their dedication to very old ideals about liberty and equality. And again, it should not be forgotten that there were Dissenters of varied social origins who regarded parliamentary changes as absolutely necessary in order to remove injustices which went against Biblical injunctions - elements flawing the Constitution and insulting the God of a Christian nation.

Clearly it is very dangerous to generalize about Congregationalists. In Bristol William Thorp was known, it seems, as an arch Tory (though it should be noted that on page 188 of The Destinies of the British Empire he advised his readers to 'stand aloof from party politics'). In the fictional Yorkshire character of the Revd Rufus Lyon of Treby Magna's Independent Chapel the situation is reversed. Mr Lyon was a fervently political preacher on the side of Reform, expressing his views 'in the face of some opposition from brethren who contend that a share in public movements is a hindrance to the closer walk'.[37]

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[37] George Eliot, Felix Holt, p. 146 (of the edition referred to in Note 21, above, this chapter).

Congregationalists obviously varied according to the social and ethnographical influences at work on them and also according to individual susceptibilities and strengths. Thus in London's large and fashionable Dissenting churches 'moderation' in politics was the byword among the ambitious ministers, at least as they are described by the Revd J. Guinness Rogers, who looked critically at the metropolis from Lancashire in the 1830s:

> Most of these men came from a somewhat higher stratum in society than the majority of their brethren, and they all succeeded in preserving a grace of manner and a singularly refined and gentlemanly bearing. Some of them were positively Tory in politics, and all had a distinctly Conservative tendency, both in mind and temperament, greatly disliking everything that savoured of Democratic Radicalism, proud of their moderation, and using that word in a very emphatic sense . . . The influence exerted by some of these men in circles generally inaccessible to Dissenting ministers was one of the features of the time. The Duke of Sussex was said to be a frequent visitor at the Peckham Congregational Church and reckoned Dr. Collyer amongst his personal friends. Dr. Vaughan, during his ministry at Kensington, attracted even more attention from an aristocratic circle, of whom the Duchess of Sutherland was the most remarkable member. His successor, Dr. Stoughton, who had been well known and respected at Windsor, preserved, to some extent, the traditions of his predecessor. 38

Rogers himself, on the other hand, was very definitely a 'Democratic Radical', the son of a Congregationalist minister who spoke out in favour of Disestablishment along with other early critics of the Church and its secular powers. As a boy, Rogers read strictly religious works - the Bible itself and the writings of Bunyan - though later at school he discovered the joys of reading novels, beginning with James Fenimore Cooper's Last of the Mohicans. 'As to definite Nonconformist teaching, we were carefully trained not only in the [Westminster]

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38 An Autobiography, pp. 158-159.

Assembly's Catechism, but also in Palmer's Protestant Dissenter's Catechism'.[39]

The Revd Samuel Palmer's Protestant Dissenter's Catechism was a frequently re-issued document, which contained an outline of the history of Protestant Dissent in England and an open condemnation[40] of the Established Church:

> Dissenters apprehend such power as our present constitution gives him [the monarch] in affairs of religion to be not only foreign to the province of the civil magistrate, but highly derogatory to the honour of Christ, whom God hath appointed 'Head over all things to the church' and a gross infringement on the liberty of Christians, who, in matters of faith and conscience, are forbidden to be the servants of men (I Cor. vii 23).

An earlier edition of the same Catechism puts the Revd Palmer's views a little differently, emphasizing 'the right of private judgment, and liberty of conscience, the acknowledgement of Christ alone as head of his Church, and the sufficiency of the holy scriptures as the rule of faith and practice. If these, therefore, are given up or forgotten, this nation may again be lost in the labyrinths of Popish superstition, and groan under the weight of Church tyranny'.[41] Anyone who took this sort of catechism seriously was bound to active 'political Dissent' rather than to the quiescent stance taken by the ministers of the fashionable chapels.

Activists came from all quarters, not simply from industrial areas. The Revd J. Barfett of Lauceston in Cornwall championed Reform and the duty of Dissenters to support the Bill. He published a pamphlet on the subject in London in 1832.[42] The pages of the Congregational Magazine in 1831 were covered with the opposing views of 'Alpha' (who was a 'quietist') and 'Beta' and 'Omega' (who viewed politics as a Christian obligation), all doing battle on the subject of politics and the Christian duty. The same is true of the Leeds Mercury and of The Patriot at the same crucial period. The two last-named periodicals, and the Eclectic Review were essentially, though by no means exclusively Congregationalist magazines for a very long period, and for Samuel Colman one or more of these papers may have been regular and formative reading. All favoured the Reform Bill, although the Congregational Magazine and the Eclectic Review (edited by Josiah Conder) tended towards moderation or 'gradualism' as regards changes in laws affecting Dissenters, and especially in respect to the disestablishment of the Church of England. The pages of these journals make fascinating reading, as opinions appear in echo of the Revd Palmer, or caution gentle pressure for 'redress of grievances' rather than all-out extinction of the Church's long association with the secular government of the country.[43]

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[39] Rogers, p. 41.

[40] The quotation is taken from page 25 of a London edition dated 1844.

[41] The Protestant Dissenter's Catechism (Belfast, 1824), pp. v, vi.

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[42] The Question: 'Ought the Profession of Religion to interfere with Politics?' considered in a Letter to a Friend (London, 1832).

[43] See Martin, 'The Politics of the Congregationalists', especially Chapter Two: 'The Dissenting Programme of the Thirties'. Martin covers in detail the varying priorities of the correspondents in the magazines and demonstrates the influence of such activists as Joshua Wilson of London and George Hadfield of Sheffield. Both of these men (like Thomas Binney, and many others writing in the Congregational Magazine, or making their views known through the Society for Promoting Ecclesiastical Knowledge, which was founded in 1829) were firmly and articulately opposed to an Established Church. However, the British Anti-State Church Association was not formed until 1844.

Samuel Colman's activities as a voter in Bristol from 1832 onwards remain as obscure as if there had been a secret ballot in those days. However, as I have suggested, the known facts about members of the congregation at Zion Chapel do point to a general tendency on the part of that group of people towards active and even quite 'radical' Congregationalism. Zion's minister, Revd John Everett Good, was present at the meeting on 13 March 1833 at which the Bristol branch of the Congregational Union was formed. Also among those at the meeting were John Hare and his fellow deacon at Zion, John Godwin, and Robert Fletcher (one of the trustees of the chapel). Richard Ash (also a Zion trustee) was voted Treasurer of the new association.[44] The Revd Good was recorded as present at the first Annual General Meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, held in the Congregational Library, Blomfield Street (Finsbury Circus) in London from 7 to 10 May 1833. The meetings were taken up to a large extent by discussions of the old 'grievances' experienced by Dissenters. The delegates voted to petition Parliament on the subject of Church Rates, which were detested by nonconformists because they were levied 'toward the maintenance of a splendid Ecclesiastical Establishment whose very existence, as such, they [Dissenters] esteem an encroachment on the authority and prerogative of their Lord and Saviour; so that [though] by their principles and profession they voluntarily maintain their own worship and ministry, they are compelled by law to pay equally with those who approve of the established form'.[45]

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[44] See Congregational Magazine, June 1833, p. 307.

[45] Again, Congregational Magazine, June 1833, p. 380.

It is likely that the Church Rates levied on Dissenters as well as on members of the Established Church were detested by Colman just as much as by most chapel-goers of the period. In St James's Fair there is an advertisement tacked to the side of the bookstall, at the extreme left of the painting. It reads: 'JUST PUBLISH'D/The Origin/of/TYTHES'.

I have already mentioned the sporting gentleman standing with his back to the viewer in St James's Fair, ignoring the Bible and the gaze of the rather dour bookseller, and concentrating instead on a racing schedule. Besides the possibility of this man's involvement in the slave trade, Colman appears to be hinting at the noncooperation of the 'gentry' in Dissenters' attempts to be exempted from paying Church Rates. Landowning interests tended to be Church interests (especially when a local landed proprietor had the patronage of the parish church at his disposal). St James's Fair was painted in 1824. The complaint about Church Rates was still one of the chief of the Dissenters' 'grievances' after the passage of the Reform Bill, and Whig members of Parliament who had aristocratic or landed interests disappointed their erstwhile supporters among nonconformists by failing to press for support for legislation against Church Rates. 'From the end of 1832', according to H.R. Martin, 'local resistance to church rates, and conscientious refusal to pay, spontaneously spread through the country'.[46] John Latimer notes that as late as April of 1837 a Mr Brown, a 'respectable' Dissenter, of Queen Square, Bristol, had the nasty experience of having a bailiff's enforcement order carried out on his property because he refused to pay

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[46] 'The Politics of the Congregationalists', p. 50.

'dues' to St Stephen's Parish.[47]

A report in the Bristol Mercury helps to explain how strongly feelings in Bristol were running against Church Rates in 1834, among Baptists and Independents. The article (dated 18 January 1834, appearing on page four, columns 2 and 3 of the Mercury) is particularly interesting because it quotes at length from a speech made by the Revd Good at a public meeting about the 'Rights of Dissenters' which was held at King Street Chapel and chaired by Richard Ash. Good expressed himself as being in favour of the separation of Church and State and emphasized the unfairness of the rates imposed on those who were not Anglicans: 'Why should I, who never trouble the Church with my presence, pay a rate to find mops and brushes for cleansing it? . . . If they want a little assistance, and would ask me for it in kindness, in kindness I would give it; but it is the principle I look at, the compulsion I object to'. The Revd Benjamin Parsons added, 'If the Church is in danger, what is it from - dissenters? This is admitting that dissenters support the Church. And what if they should withdraw their support from it - will the church fall? Why, if so, then the Church is built, not upon Christ, but upon dissent'.

Incidentally, John Good's ministry in Bristol did not last beyond 1834. The Hare MSS record a scandal at Zion Chapel which grew out of the development of rumours about Good's personal life during the time he was a pastor in Salisbury. John Hare, Sr, learned that Good had been accused of adultery by a Mrs Fisher. Although Hare later denied that he had spread the rumour, it became widely talked about and Mr Hare was considered by a number of Bristol ministers and laymen to be responsible for a conspiracy against Mr Good. The minister, for his part, made the mistake of attempting to have Hare disfellowshipped (from the chapel he had founded). There were ugly exchanges of letters on the subject; but the gossip does have the merit of informing readers that Good had 'taken a very active part in the proceedings of the Political Union at Salisbury, in a manner very offensive to the Church people there'.[48] Also of interest is a letter from Good to John Hare, Jr. Dated 30 December 1834, it reads in substance:

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[47] Annals of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century, p. 238.

> In removing from this city, I cannot refrain from expressing my respect for yourself and Mrs Hare personally. I deeply regret that any circumstances should have prevented that friendly intercourse which was formerly cherished. I beg however to assure you that on my part I feel the fullest satisfaction with the course of neutrality you have pursued and the kind expressions I have heard you have uttered on my behalf. 49

Richard Ash, whose name appears, at the turn of almost any page of Bristol newspapers or manuscripts, in the part of peacemaker, took charge of diplomatic manoeuvres, and by 24 February 1835 he was 'rejoiced to find that he [Mr Good] had received an invitation from a Congregation at Gosport'.[50] In the same letter, Ash notes that some members of the Zion congregation, including the Hares and Cottles and 'various other very respectable persons, whose names I could mention', had left the chapel during the hostilities, though 'most, if not all of them' had since returned

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48 T. Binks to John Hare, Bristol Record Office - 8033/36.

49 Bristol Record Office - 8033/41.

50 Richard Ash to Bristol Congregational ministers, Bristol Record Office - 8033/44a.

(following Good's departure). Clearly, since Samuel Colman was among the members who signed the invitation to David Thomas to come to be pastor at Zion, he was part of the congregation as late as November, 1835.[51] One wishes, however, that Ash had actually named the 'other very respectable persons' since by doing so he might have shed light on Colman's feelings about a man who was a friend of the radical John Hare, Jr.

In discussing Congregationalists' interest in parliamentary reform in this chapter, I have concentrated on the debate about Church Rates because this is a subject about which there is a substantial body of documentary evidence for the views of people associated with Zion Chapel, and because Colman seems to have alluded to the topic in St James's Fair. This means that, up till now, there has been no coverage of the most famous political event in Bristol in Colman's lifetime - the Bristol Riots which broke out during the weekend of 29 and 30 October 1831. In the Zion Chapel Minute Book there is a note to the effect that on Sunday evening, 30 October, there was 'no service in consequence of riots' (page 40), and later, that 'an awful visitation afflicted the city by rioting' (page 46). Samuel Colman appears to have taken an artist's interest in the riots - from the information we have of a sketch of the Custom House, carried out at the time.[52] There is a possiblity that the dramatic scenes presented by these troubles contributed to the mysterious imagery in The Coming of the Messiah. Therefore, although the riots were confusedly associated with political issues much wider than Dissenters' interests - and although they were certainly not caused by respectable, chapel-going Dissenters - it will be appropriate to consider some of the details a little later, in the discussion of The Coming of the Messiah.

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[51] See pp. 112 and 115 of the Zion Chapel Minute Book, Bristol Record Office.

[52] See above, Chapter One, Note 18.

Chapter Four, it may be remembered, included a detailed analysis of Colman's painting of St John Preaching in the Wilderness as evidence of the artist's interest in the Sublime and in the Bible as a source of Sublime subject-matter. Although it might appear - from the length of the examination - as if all possible meaning must have been milked from the picture and from Colman's own explanatory pamphlet, both the picture and the tract can also be used to teach present-day viewers how to detect humanitarian and political messages in Colman's biblical subject-pictures.

The painter's concern for negro slaves can be quickly detected. Close to the converted soldier in the centre of the scene a white man is wrapping his cloak around a black neighbour. In the pamphlet Colman says this soldier is 'another convert' who is 'following the Preacher's admonition, in clothing the naked with his own mantle' (page 5). 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God', John preached, quoting Isaiah (Luke 3.6, to be compared with Isaiah 52.10). Colman did not fail to repeat the words in his sixpenny pamphlet. In addition, to dispel any doubt on the part of the viewer as to the meaning of the text, he included in the foreground of the painting a black man, kneeling in rapt attention to the Baptist, with eyes lifted towards the preacher. The figure of this negro is a reversal of the emblematic image familiar to almost everybody in Colman's day as the medallion of the Abolition Society. The motif had appeared as a Wedgwood cameo in 1788 and within a few years it had become an everyday sight on bracelets, brooches, hair-pins and even snuff boxes. The motto accompanying the original seal read, 'Am I not a man and a brother?'.[53]

Noticeably, although his chosen text makes no mention of it, Colman's leaflet emphasizes the hostility of priests and Pharisees to the work of the Baptist, 'the activity of the Priests in opposing the Preacher's doctrine'. Colman points out that he has included among the figures 'an insinuating Priest' who whispers to the Chief Captain something unpleasant about the soldier who has been converted by John's sermon. Another priest, readers are told, is using scripture to support his arguments against John's persuasive words. Pharisees are singled out too as 'boasting' and ignorant. It is possible (as I have indicated in Chapter Five) that Colman was using his picture and its accompanying 'description' to make veiled allegations against the clergy of the Church of England, especially those who tried to frustrate the work of field evangelists. It is also just possible that Colman was making his own kind of attack against the Catholic church. If this is so, then John is to be read, at one level, as a Protestant reformer and martyr-to-be, with the priests and their associates among the Pharisees as the powers of the corrupt pre-Reformation Church. The congregation, viewed at the same level, becomes the True Church, which has gone out into the Wilderness, like John and his disciples. Appropriately, this gathering place is shaped like an Alpine valley such as the Waldenses, or the followers of Zwingli might have assembled in for worship - so that the general tone of the scene (looked at in this way) is of a metaphor of a Puritan conventicle or of a Wesleyan open-air service - a claim that the revivalist preachers of Colman's own times were the same kind of men as the persecuted European reformers or as the Protestants of non-Anglican conviction in seventeenth-century Britain.

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[53] I am grateful to Dr Ellwood C. Parry III for recognizing Colman's use of the famous emblem, and for pointing it out to me in January 1982.

In stressing the hostile priests and Pharisees, Colman is obviously making use, not only of the text he quotes in his pamphlet - from the third chapter of St Luke's Gospel - but of the passages in John, Chapter one and Matthew, Chapter three which present slightly different versions of the story of the Baptist. (In Matthew 3.7 it is the Pharisees and Sadducees who are addressed by Jesus as a 'generation of vipers'. Luke applies this expression to the entire 'multitude'.) The painting is therefore an early demonstration of Colman's capacity to connect one passage from the Bible with another in order to enlarge on the meaning of the chosen main text. This, of course, was, and is, normal practice for a preacher. The description of St John Preaching simply underlines the fact that Colman's pictures are not to be taken as mere illustrations of the Bible, but as dissertations, sermons.

On page seven of the pamphlet Colman selects a quotation from Luke which reminds the reader that John's commission to announce Christ's ministry was foretold by Isaiah many years beforehand. He lays particular emphasis on John's role as herald of a new 'Dispensation', a triumphant era when 'the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose' (Isaiah 35.1). This text, of course, is not to be reconciled with any event in the earthly ministry of Christ. It is usually (and certainly was in Colman's day) interpreted as part of a poetic description of a future

Kingdom of Christ, a delightful and confident period following the return to their own land of those 'whom the Lord has set apart for himself' (as Matthew Henry points out, referring to the words of Psalm 4.3). A Dissenter such as Colman may have been expecting his readers to extrapolate from this reference to Isaiah that St John was a symbol of the preacher of Truth in any age, the loyal messenger of God (a Revd William Thorp, for example?) who does not fear to foretell the vengeance due to sinners and the recompense that will be the reward of the Faithful.

Colman's most revealing use of Bible cross-referencing (and one particularly interesting in respect of his politics) appears on page six of his pamphlet: 'Beneath the feet of Saint John is a withered Tree cut down, explanatory of the Baptist's words, "The axe is laid unto the root of the tree;" and a Serpent (descriptive of Sin), is recovering from a deadly blow and cleaving to its branches.'

Matthew Henry's Exposition says of Luke 3.9 (in reference to the axe 'laid unto the root of the trees'): 'If it serve not for fruit, to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel, to the honour of his justice'. Scott's commentary adds: 'Hypocrites and wicked professors of the gospel' are 'trees, at whose root the axe is laid to cut them speedily down that they may be "cast into the fire"'. Colman is very likely to have been picturing, not just a judgement for the hypocritical priests and pharisees of the time of John the Baptist, but a cutting away of all false religion before the final Judgement of Christ.

Finally, paired with the quotation from the Gospels is Colman's reference to the serpent 'recovering from a deadly blow'. These words transparently paraphrase a line in the book of Revelation: 'And I saw one of his heads [that is, one of the seven heads of the ten-horned beast which rose out of the sea] as it were wounded unto death; and his deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beast' (Revelation 13.3). Of course the beast seen in vision by St John was not a serpent but a horrible conglomerate of leopard, bear and lion, with the power of a dragon. But the dragon of the Revelations is the self-same serpent-shaped devil, recognizable in Genesis 3.14 and 15, who was warned by God that he must be at 'enmity' with a coming Saviour who would 'bruise thy head'.[54] Colman might be excused (along with others) for giving his sinful serpent the meaning accorded by most people examining the Bible in his day when they looked at verse three of Revelation 13. And the majority of those attempting to grapple with the mysterious text applied it to some form of calamity occurring to the Papacy, yet subsequently reversed. Both the cautious Scott and the more 'enthusiastic' Irving interpreted the 'deadly blow' as the overpowering of Augustulus by forces invading Rome, and the 'healing' as the 'revival of the imperial name and dignity in the person of Charlemagne' in A.D. 800.[55] Scott identifies the beast to which the head belonged as Papal Rome. He admits the possibility that the 'deadly wound' may refer to a more recent occurrence than the overthrow of Rome hundreds of years in the past, but is wary of making any hasty application of the prophecy to current events as many of his contemporaries were doing. The interpretation of Revelation 13.3 which was much in vogue around the turn of the century (and given credence by many Bible exegetists) was the theory which identified the capture of the Pope in 1798 by Napoleon's general, Berthier, with the dealing of a 'deadly wound' to the beast with ten horns. As Ernest Sandeen says, 'after the fact' it was easy to see that the 1,260 years of the beast's reign (the forty-two months of Revelation 13.5) must represent the period between 538 A.D. when the Papacy achieved its full power in the first instance, and 1798, when it appeared to crumble. The year 1798, concludes Sandeen, was a 'prophetic Rosetta stone' and an invitation to a wide variety of Bible expositors to indulge their passion for the interpretation of prophetic scriptures and to rush into print.[56]

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[54] See Revelation 12.17 and Romans 16.20.

[55] See Scott's 'Commentary', Volume Six, on Revelation 13.3. See also Irving's 'Plan of the Apocalypse' in Jones, p. 340 (lecture section).

What emerges from an examination of the debate and from a brief study of Bible commentaries by men respected for theological moderation is the strong suggestion that any reference to a 'serpent recovering from a deadly blow' is intended as a remark about some agent of papal power. Colman's choice of references - to the necessary work of the axe, cutting down the dead trees, and to the 'cleaving' to the withered branches by the recovering serpent - certainly leaves one in no doubt that he was, at the very least, interested in the current study of Revelation and in the debate about the meaning of texts implying the revival of Papal power.

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[56] Ernest R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930 (Chicago, 1970), pp. 6 and 7. He cites Edward King's Remarks on the Signs of the Times (London, 1798) as the contemporary source which first caught the public imagination, while the Revd George Stanley Faber's Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to the Great Period of the 1260 Years (1804) was another key work, and a starting-point for people with different theories.

In summary, St John Preaching, and the all-important descriptive brochure by the artist, show that Colman was capable of making use of familiar imagery (in this case the emblem of the black slave) and of a variety of Bible texts to create an intriguing blend of sermon and political manifesto. Not everyone who saw the picture would be expected to recognize all the layers of meaning. 'Philographicus', as we know, certainly must have missed most of them; he scoffed at the 'practical pun' he did notice in the 'withered tree cut down'. Yet one wonders what interpretation he put on Colman's later biblical paintings - if he bothered to go to see them.

On 24 August 1830 Samuel Coman's advertisement of the exhibition of 'The Israelites' Passage through the Red Sea' made its appearance in the Bristol Mercury. During the same week similar advertisements were printed in other Bristol newspapers; and, as I have indicated in Chapter One, the 'peculiar', or even 'very peculiar' circumstances under which this picture was apparently painted - according to the wording of the announcements - remain a complete mystery. One can speculate about possible connections with the politics of the year, of course, and although speculation is always a hazard, the validity of this approach is warranted by what is known about the political hints in Colman's earlier pictures.

The text for the triumphant scene which Colman has pictured in The Delivery of Israel (Pl. 36) may be read in Exodus Chapter fourteen.[57] Note first of all verse 13: 'And Moses said unto the people,

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[57] It will be assumed that Colman's 1830 painting is to be identified with the large canvas now in Birmingham and entitled The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt. For convenience, I have used the present-day title.

Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever'.

The story of what happened next is familiar. 'And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left' (Exodus 14.21,22). Unfortunately for the armies of Pharaoh, the Egyptian leaders decided to pursue the escaping Israelite slaves across this supernaturally prepared pathway. 'And it came to pass that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians. And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians' (verses 24, 25). But it was too late to turn back, for at God's command 'Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea' (verse 27).

The viewer of Colman's extraordinary scene of turmoil looks beyond the sea-bed which is being formed by a vortex of rocks and water into the grave of the Egyptian army and Pharaoh's 'chosen captains'. At the end of a tunnel filled with upheaval, in which men and animals crash to the ground or struggle in vain to take refuge from the anger of God beamed out across the valley, the tiny figure of Moses can be seen standing on the 'solid rock' which represents his governing faith in God.

A supremely confident vision such as this, painted at least three years before the king's signature was placed on the Bill to abolish slavery, lends eloquent support to the idea of Samuel Colman as artist and prophet. More plausibly, perhaps, the picture may be a visual equivalent of the 'Declaration' published in the Bristol Mercury on 13 July 1830 (p. 3, col. 2). Signed by John Hare, Sr, who headed the list, as well as by his son John, Jr, and by Richard Ash and many other prominent Bristol citizens, the declaration read:

> We, the undersigned, are firmly convinced, that personal freedom is the birthright of every human being; and that every person owing allegiance to the Crown of this Empire, is justly entitled, as the condition of such allegiance, to the full enjoyment of the Civil Rights and immunities of a Free-born British Subject.
>
> We consider no man to be a fit Representative of Britons, who does not entertain these opinions as sacred and inviolable articles of his Political Belief. And we hereby pledge our word and promise to each other and to the world, that in the ensuing general Election, we will give our respective votes to no Candidate for a seat in Parliament, who will not solemnly and publicly engage to promote the practical application of these principles, whenever British Colonial Slavery shall be brought under the consideration of the House of Commons. - Bristol, July, 1830.

Looked at in this light, Colman's Moses may be seen as Edward Protheroe, the Abolitionist candidate, in which case Pharaoh and his host must represent Baillie and Claxton and their party. The election campaign, as it proceeded, was certainly acrimonious - and violent - enough to make such an interpretation of the painting credible. This way of seeing the picture is given support by the information (again available in the newspapers) that the election was regarded by some people at the time as a battle between Church and Dissent. On 3 August, for example

(p. 2, col. 3), the Mercury published a statement by 'T. Roberts' (evidently the Revd Thomas Roberts):

> A Report has been spread that I have asserted, 'That the present Contest turns on the pre-eminence for influence between the Church of England and the Dissenting interest.' I do hereby solemnly declare, that no such sentiment has ever crossed my mind, nor any such language has ever escaped my lips. My declaration has been, and still is, that the present Contest is between Colonial Slavery and Universal Freedom. So far from believing that the Contest is between the Church and Dissenting influence, I assure the whole City that I would not have appeared in this Election on such an insignificant principle. T. Roberts.

The political situation as a whole at this period was often described in the vocabulary of war. Take, for instance, the following passage from a long unsigned article on reform in the Eclectic Review. Though it dates from the spring of 1831, it might in some respects apply to the situation in 1830:

> On the one side are ranged in dark conspiracy the corruptionists, the peculators, the abettors of slavery, the enemies of civil liberty, those who think they have a right to do what they will with their own, those who would gladly reduce the people of this country to the condition of serfs, and draw the sword in another crusade of despots. On the other side we have . . . the preponderance of talent, of property, and of public worth, - of every thing that can dignify rank or benefit society, - every name that is known to philanthropy, - the friends of peace, - the friends of education, - the friends of truth, - the Cabinet and the Throne. But, more than this, we feel a cheerful confidence that there is ONE for us, greater than all, who 'means mercy to' our land. 58

If Colman's Delivery of Israel alludes to a 'Contest' between Church and Dissent, the references are certainly not clear. What is apparent, however, is that the artist has given prominence in the scene to the priests of Egypt. Since the account of the exodus of the Children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt does not mention priests, it must

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58 Eclectic Review, Third Series, 5 (1831), p. 448.

be taken, from their appearance in the painting, that Colman intended to make a point, to use these symbols of idolatry as part of the sermon enclosed in the picture.

Explaining Revelation 14.8 ('Babylon is fallen'), Matthew Henry writes in his Commentary: 'By Babylon is generally understood Rome, which was before called Sodom and Egypt, for wickedness and cruelty; and is now first called Babylon, for her pride and idolatry'. In The Delivery of Israel therefore, where Egyptian priests are seen kneeling in prayer to images of the sun god, and where some sort of religious ceremony is taking place in the foreground of the picture, Colman can be understood to be commenting on Roman Catholic idolatry. It is not unlikely that by 1830 he would have heard William Thorp declare that 'the blood of Africa is crying from her burning sands to heaven, for vengeance against all the nations of Europe, especially the papal nations' - although the words just quoted did not appear in print until 1831.[59] Thorp, of course, would have considered anyone a type of Moses who could have broken the chain of Britain's 'slavery' forged, according to his way of thinking, when Roman Catholic Emancipation became law; but, associated with everything that is known about Thorp's attitude to colonial slavery, the quotation just given provides the more feasible link between Thorp and Colman's own 'sermon'.

Fascinatingly, Revd Thorp provides another dimension to the subject of trading interests - one which, to my knowledge, was not touched on in the election campaign in Bristol, but which is just possibly implied by the strong condemnation of the idolatrous priests in Colman's painting. On page 89 of The Destinies of the British Empire Thorp points out that 'we form a very contracted view of the iniquity of our colonial system, if we confine our attention to the West Indies'. He then proceeds to describe various pilgrimages which take place in India, and festivals which involve horrible scenes of self-torture and of human sacrifice. These pagan ceremonies, Thorp claims, are condoned, and even encouraged, by the British government, which imposes a tax on the pilgrims for permission to visit the shrines, and even pays salaries to the native custodians of the temples. This practice encourages the local populations to place a great deal of value on their gods - Juggernaut, for example - and to take little notice of Christian evangelism by the missionaries sent out from Britain. Not surprisingly, Revd Thorp fears for the outcome of this state of affairs:

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[59] The Destinies of the British Empire, p. 87.

> The surplus of this tax, collected from only the four temples, which I have mentioned, which went into the possession of the British government, after discharging all other expenses, in the last fifteen years, amounted to upwards of one million sterling. All these facts, and many others, not less enormous, were stated, and proved by an accumulation of testimony, which could not be questioned, before a general meeting of East India proprietors, in December last, in a speech by John Poynder, Esq., for the purpose of recommending and supporting, one would think, a very harmless motion; merely that the government should abolish the tax, renounce all participation in this detestable superstition, and leave idolatry to stand or fall by its own merits, since British connection only increases its injurious celebrity; . . . and, strange to say, in this country - in the Metropolis of the British Empire - in Leadenhall-street, this motion was negatived, by a considerable majority. Is there no ground here for fearful apprehension? Is not idolatry branded in scripture with the peculiar curse of a holy and righteous God? Is it not reprobated, anathematized, and condemned, in every part of his holy word? Is it not constantly mentioned, not only as a cause, but as a principal cause, of the desolations of nations and empires? Whence the plagues of Egypt, the excision of the nations of Canaan, the judgments inflicted on the ancient Israelites, the dens of Babylon, the pools of Nineveh, and the overthrow of the idolatrous nations of antiquity? . . . Oh! my country, may God have mercy upon thee in the day of his fierce anger! Is not this an additional cause for national humiliation and the putting on of sackcloth? (pages 98-100)

Strongly suggested by all this is the idea that he who succeeds in freeing India from the evils of this kind of greed and superstition will be a type of Moses.

It would be foolish to suggest that The Delivery of Israel was intended by Samuel Colman to be read primarily as a visual counterpart to William Thorp's condemnation of the British exploitation of India. As very often with Colman's pictures, there are several possible meanings allowed by the imagery; but the main thrust of the scene must surely be that of the anti-slavery campaign in progress at the time of the 1830 General Election.

Belshazzar's Feast (Pls 53 - 61) is undoubtedly another of Colman's 'emancipation paintings'. Just when it was painted is not known, but it bears the patently false signature, 'J. Martin, R.A., 1830'. While the person who tried to pass off Colman's painting as a John Martin was obviously ignorant of the fact that Martin was never a member of the Royal Academy, that same person made an intelligent guess at the date of the picture; and although I believe the guess to be slightly inaccurate, it is tempting to think of the two paintings, The Delivery of Israel and Belshazzar's Feast as a pair.

In the other three large apocalyptic pictures Colman draws together several biblical and even extra-biblical events, whereas in these two paintings he concentrates in each case on one specific Bible story. In The Delivery of Israel the artist limits the action of the scene to the narrative of Exodus Chapter 14 (with emphasis on verses 24-27) and to selections from Chapter 15. In Belshazzar's Feast the text is Daniel, Chapter 5 (with allusions to the first chapter of Ezra and to Isaiah, Chapter 45). In other words, whereas the three other big cataclysmic pictures are visionary interpretations of complex prophetic statements, the scenes depicted in The Delivery of Israel and in Belshazzar's Feast are more tightly focused on their respective Bible stories. In each picture a prophet of Israel sees the downfall of his nation's enemy.

The two paintings also share a number of powerful visual images - notably the red curtains against which warriors are silhouetted and the middle-distance figures of kings with toppling crowns. In each scene the light enters from a central source - though this source is hidden in Belhsazzar's Feast by the outrageous canopied throne. It is also noticeable that in each picture Colman has filled the topmost twenty-five per cent of the space with wide horizontal shapes - the painted beams of the ceiling of Belshazzar's hall, and the cloud-barred sky above the camp of Israel and the Wilderness of Shur. In The Delivery of Israel long beams extending from the pillar of light are emphasized by the lines of marching men and camels; and in Belshazzar's Feast similar shafts of light are echoed by the long narrow banqueting tables at the sides of the hall, and by the minstrels' galleries and architectural decorations. The major compositional difference between the two scenes is that in Belshazzar's Feast the light is barred by the throne of the evil king, throwing a shadow over the central table (which acts as a visual pathway to Belshazzar); while in The Delivery of Israel the light enters without opposition, striking into confusion the forces of the enemy and the very rocks of the sea bed below them.

A comparison of this kind leads one to the impression that Belshazzar's Feast represents a warning - or a multiplicity of different kinds of warning, spiritual and political - with its emphasis on the evil to be overthrown, the darkness to be cleared away. The Delivery of Israel, on the other hand, emphasizes achievement, action, and the light and security beyond the darkness of danger and insecurity. I must stress, however, that there is no documentary justification for linking the two paintings in this way. Nor is there evidence from other paintings that it was Colman's practice to make pairs of pictures.

When Colman took his subject from the Book of Daniel, Chapter Five, it is clear that he attempted to be very literal in his reconstruction of the Bible story. However, because he had only one canvas, one 'set', and wanted to describe a succession of happenings, he chose to conflate these events; that is, he placed side by side within this single picture-space people who had played parts in different phases of the drama of Daniel Five. He 'compressed time', much in the way that medieval painters of religious subjects were in the habit of doing, in his effort to make sure that his entire sermon could be presented as one pictorial entity.

John Martin's method of telling the same story was very similar. His Belshazzar's Feast (Pl 62) was first shown to the public in February 1821, at the British Institution. It caused a sensation with the viewers. Martin's old employer, William Collins, bought the painting, and it continued to attract thousands of visitors when he put it on show in his shop in the Strand.[60] Martin issued a descriptive pamphlet, complete with a diagram signed 'J. Martin 1821' and this four-page leaflet is thought to have been on sale while the painting was still at the British

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[60] See Feaver, The Art of John Martin, p. 52.

Institution. During the same year there were also two editions of a sixteen-page pamphlet about the picture, sold at the Strand exhibition.[61]

Martin made it clear that his painting was to be regarded as a drama in three acts. In the 'first act of the drama, or Protasis' the writing on the wall has been newly completed and the characters 'fill the whole of the Atrium with awful resplendency, and the whole assembly with horror and distress'. In the second act (Epitasis) a 'stubborn' king and terrified court rush hither and thither. Finally the Catastrophe (Act 3) introduces Daniel, 'now the focus of interest', who delivers his 'decisive interpretation' of the writing on the wall. In spite of these stated divisions, however, the action appears unified and the painting centres quite definitely on Daniel and the general consternation of the Babylonian court. Martin does not attempt to include the next 'scene' in the story - the destruction of Belshazzar and his courtiers - whereas Colman emphasizes this final episode. In Colman's painting, says Morton Paley, 'everything happens with apocalyptic simultaneity, and overall unity of effect is subordinated to an urgent message delivered iconographically'.[62]

'Belshazzar the King made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousand', claims verse one of Daniel,

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[61] The shorter leaflet is simply entitled, Belshazzar's Feast. The earlier 16-page pamphlet is called, A Description of the Picture, 'Belshazzar's Feast', painted by Mr. Martin, lately exhibited at the British Institution, and now at No. 343, Strand, the first door on the left in Catherine Street (London, 1821). The second edition of this descriptive brochure included a discussion of Martin's Joshua. See Thomas Balston, John Martin, 1789-1854: His Life and Works (London, 1947). Balston reproduces, on pages 260-265, the diagram and text from the first edition of the 16-page leaflet (May, 1821).

[62] The Apocalyptic Sublime, section on Colman, in preparation.

Chapter Five. In Colman's picture we can see, not only a table of astonishing width, stretching down the middle of a very long hall, but also narrower side tables continuing out of the hall into a courtyard. Above the high wall which surrounds the enclosure can be glimpsed a 'Tower of Babel' against a moonlit sky. On the balconies high above the tables musicians play on harps, gongs and trumpets. Men and women sit at the tables, and in front of them are the 'golden vessels' which were 'taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem' (Daniel 5.2), for Belshazzar has been scorning God by using these consecrated treasures at his licentious gathering. Some of the drunken princes of Babylon slump with their heads on the table and their hands clutching the tablecover. At the far end of the central table is an enormous dais, curiously tilted towards the viewer. On it is Belshazzar's golden throne, covered by a curtained canopy that reaches up to the roof. The snakes and sun-discs of Babylon squirm and glitter above the tiny figure of the king, and smoke puffs out of two huge urns which flank the throne and its ornaments.

In all this splendour the debauched and blasphemous ruler cuts a puny figure. He has been caught by the artist just at the moment when the 'fingers of a man's hand' have begun to write on the wall the promise of doom. (The shadowy fingers can be made out high up on the curtain to the left.) Daniel tells us that Belshazzar's 'countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another' (Daniel 5.6). Here we watch Belshazzar as he draws back in fear, looking out wildly into the room. His crown topples from his head, perhaps because he is shaking with fright. The queen (who enters the story at verse ten of the chapter) is over on the left of the platform, leaning towards Belshazzar, pleading with him to listen to the wisdom of the Hebrew captive, Daniel, the forgotten 'dissolver of doubts' (Daniel 5.12) who, through his faith in his God, had won success at the court of Belshazzar's predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar.[63] Daniel stands to the king's right (the viewer's left) and on a lower level of the great dais. He gestures prophetically towards the writing on the wall, while nearby a servant waits to 'clothe Daniel with scarlet and put a chain of gold about his neck' (Daniel 5.29) and the Babylonian soothsayers search their scrolls of wisdom in obvious panic.

On the right of the banqueting hall the frenzied action indicates another episode in the story. Soldiers brandishing swords and spears cut their way into the hall. The terrified revellers rush away towards the centre and back of the courtyard. Servants drop the dishes they are carrying. A man and a woman on the right leap over a table. Bodies lie scattered on the green carpet. Over one of them, on the right, near the front of the big table, stands a young warrior with his sword lifted up in triumph. This is evidently Colman's portrait of Cyrus the Great, the vigorous leader of the army of 'the Medes and the Persians' who captured the decadent city of Babylon.[64] Daniel reports that 'in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain'

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[63] The queen was probably Nebuchadnezzar's widow, according to various commentators.

[64] Colman would certainly have associated Cyrus with the capture of Babylon, although Daniel does not mention this deliverer by name. See Ezra, Chapter One, and Isaiah 44.28 and Isaiah 45.1-5. See also Chapter Four, above, especially footnotes 40 and 41.

(Daniel 5.30). The sins of Babylon were beyond redemption and the prediction on the wall was not slow to come to pass.

This ambitious painting stretched the artist's talents to the limit. It demanded that he become an architectural draughtsman, a landscapist and student of dramatic light and a 'history painter', capable of drawing the human figure in all sorts of meaningful poses. By conventional standards Colman did not possess artistic gifts in keeping with the scope of his work. The light in the painting is mysterious and forceful, reminiscent of the light in his Tintern Abbey interior (Pl. 22). But his handling of perspective and anatomy is inadequate - by normal standards. The incredible relationship of tables to throne, or of diners to the vast tables, is fantastic to the point of naivety. In spite of this, or perhaps because of this naive quality, Colman's picture succeeds in conveying an urgent message about the wickedness and confusion on that last night of carousing. It is as if Colman were saying that Belshazzar had defied God with presumption out of all 'proportion' to his station and had sinned beyond all 'measure'.[65]

As in St John Preaching and St James's Fair, Colman makes use of a number of images redrawn from the work of other artists. His artistic debt to Hogarth alone is increased by the use of at least two references.

Belshazzar himself is quoted from Hogarth's famous portrait of Garrick in the part of Shakespeare's Richard III (Pl. 65). Without question, prints of this painting would have been readily available in

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[65] I am reminded of the best and most charming biblical fantasies by the American 'primitive' painter (and Congregationalist), Erastus Salisbury Field (1805-1900).

Bristol. Hogarth himself had issued an engraving in 1746, and it will be remembered (from Chapter Five, above) that Mr Bowden included the 'works of Hogarth' among the books he offered for sale at St James's Fair in 1823.[66]

Colman could also have used another Hogarth engraving, Paul Before Felix (Pl. 64), when planning his dais and throne.[67] Hogarth's painting, of which he made an engraving in 1752, was based compositionally on the Raphael cartoon, Paul and Elymas (London, Victoria and Albert Museum). Inspired either by Raphael or by Hogarth (or perhaps by both), Benjamin West painted a Daniel Interpreting to Belshazzar the Writing on the Wall.[68] Washington Allston, who had worked in West's studio, took with him a study for his own version of Belshazzar when he left England for the United States in 1818. This study (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts) shows that Allston's painting - had it ever reached a completed state - would have resembled West's 1777 picture to a considerable degree. John Martin, for his part, transformed a dramatic but essentially private confrontation into a great spectacle. Of all these artists who followed Hogarth's Paul with their own Daniels, Samuel Colman was the only one to make use of the curved steps and elaborately curtained dais designed by Hogarth (and not provided for Hogarth by Raphael). Both Hogarth and Colman may have

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66 The original painting is now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

67 This was carried out in 1748 for the Great Hall of Lincoln's Inn, London.

68 This picture is now known only in the form of an engraving by Valentine Green. For a reproduction see Dillenberger, Benjamin West, p. 30. For a reproduction of Allston's Belshazzar see Feaver, p. 50.

been familiar with J.G. Hertel's elaborately illustrated German edition of Ripa's Iconologia, or with an English version with similar plates. In Hertel's book (1758-60) the engravings by Gottfried Eichler the Younger include 'Enmity' represented by King Hamilcar, who sits atop a high, stepped podium shaped more like Colman's than Hogarth's. Below, on one of the steps, stands the king's son, swearing eternal enmity to Rome. Whatever the origin of his podium, however, Colman's Babylonian soothsayers, with their scrolls (to the left of the platform) are related to Hogarth's worried foreground scribes; and Colman's priest who, even with his holy staff of office is helpless in the face of the invading army of the Medes and the Persians, may have been suggested by the soldier leaning on a lance, who stands to Paul's left, flanking the dais, in Hogarth's print. (Colman's familiarity with Hogarth's Paul Before Felix has already been suggested, in Chapter Four, where the similarity in the gestures of Hogarth's Paul and Colman's St John was noted.)

Martin's commanding figure of the prophet Daniel is said to have been painted under the guidance of Mrs Siddons and the actor, Charles Young.[69] However, it closely resembles (especially in the engravings) the pose for Daniel chosen by Benjamin West, whose painting of Daniel and Belshazzar was put on exhibition again in response to the huge success Martin's picture was achieving in 1821.[70] It is therefore open to debate whether Colman's Daniel was modelled on Martin's or on West's version of the figure.

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[69] See Feaver, p. 51.

[70] See Dillenberger, p. 25.

Another well-known picture in the early nineteenth century was Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of the actor John Philip Kemble in the character of the Peruvian hero, Rolla (from Sheridan's version of the German melodrama, Pizarro). Lawrence's painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy and engraved by S.W. Reynolds in 1803 (Pl. 66). It would have been quite easy for Colman to see an engraving and to adapt it to his own purposes - the expression, in suitably heroic form, of his youthful hero, Cyrus.[71] The play itself would also have been familiar to Colman - at least by name, since it was performed in Bristol a number of times while he was resident there. The Bristol Observer announced the first appearance of Kean as Rolla at the Theatre Royal, on Thursday, 8 July 1819. The dates of advertisements for Pizarro which I have noted, while examining the Bristol Mercury include: 5 December 1825; 20 February 1829; and 1 February 1831, when Macready took the part of Rolla.

I find it interesting that Lawrence's pose for Kemble in a heroic stance appears to derive from Hogarth's Satan, Sin and Death. An article by David Bindman in Burlington Magazine, in 1970, demonstrated how wide-ranging the influence of the print after Hogarth appears to have been - in extending interest in the subject itself; James Barry engraved a version, and so did William Blake, for instance.[72] Professor Bindman has pointed out that prints such as that of Hogarth's Satan, Sin and Death 'were so widespread that they were often absorbed by artists quite unconsciously'.[73] Therefore any claim that Lawrence deliberately took the Hogarth figure of Satan and transformed it into a 'good guy' like Rolla, would be quite unfounded. This was not the case, however, with Jonathan Martin (the incendiary of York Minster). Not only did he make a pen and wash drawing of An Allegory based on Satan, Sin and Death which shows a direct observation of the Hogarth design, but he also produced a drawing of a curious kilted figure, in almost exactly the same pose as his Satan.[74] Both drawings appear to date from 1830, and the kilted figure is identified (in a poem written on the same piece of paper as the drawing) with the Scottish freedom-fighter, William Wallace. Martin was working from Bedlam, and with the drawing of Wallace (again on the same piece of paper) is another which appears to represent the Queen; and beside Wallace there is a large lion, wearing a crown. The verse suggests that Martin was contemplating an appeal for 'mercy' to the Queen, but without much hope: 'no mercy in England could I find'. More interesting is the large portrait drawing to the right of the Wallace figure. This, according to Martin's own inscription, is 'the likeness of my father so well as I can remember . . . This likeness will suffice for myself as well as my father'. The portrait of Martin looks very like the face of the Wallace, and Wallace is dressed, not only in what seems to be a vaguely tartan costume, but in a garter and star, so that he has the combined identity of King William, of William Wallace and of Jonathan Martin. The drawing has curiosity value, as an extreme and pathetic example of the artist at work as prophet/hero. More to the point, it demonstrates the 'reach' of powerful visual images, like Hogarth's. For Jonathan Martin the Satan figure had become an heroic pose. The same familiar gestures were evidently passed down to Samuel Colman, though not directly from Hogarth; the costume worn by the Cyrus figure is definitely not the Satan/Wallace tunic, but the much simpler garment of Rolla. Finding this heroic type - derived from a pre-eminently wicked model - reconstructed by such different people as Jonathan Martin and Sir Thomas Lawrence, gives one confidence in identifying Colman's young warrior, similarly posed, as a specially symbolic figure. It was clearly not only a specific reference - to the brave 'saviour' figure painted by Lawrence - but also a popular emblem of heroism.

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[71] Lawrence, who was born a Bristolian in 1769, died in 1830. Although there is no evidence that a memorial was intended by Colman, it is not beyond a possibility that Colman thought his viewers would be interested in an image obviously drawn from a painting by Lawrence, and therefore the more likely to understand the meaning of the emblem.

[72] See David Bindman, 'Hogarth's "Satan, Sin and Death" and its influence', Burlington Magazine, 112 (1970), 153-158.

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[73] Letter to Margaret Whidden, 26 April 1985.

[74] The 'Allegory' drawing is reproduced with the Burlington Magazine article referred to above. (See Note 72.) The whereabouts of the 'Wallace' drawing is not known. There is a photograph in the Jonathan Martin file in the Witt Library, London.

Belshazzar's Feast, as Colman painted it, has the distinct appearance of a stage tableau. The 'spotlighting' of important characters, the enormous curtains, the bright red against which the soldiers on the right are silhouetted (reminding one of the 'red fire' which was a favourite theatrical device of the period) - all these suggestions invite one to consider the possibility that the artist's use of at least two portraits of famous English actors in recognizable parts must mean that the artist expected his public to connect the roles being played by the 'actor-figures' with parts played in real life in the nineteenth century by real Englishmen.

In his study of meaning in the eighteenth-century English art, Ronald Paulson discussed how Hogarth used a well-known work of art, Dürer's Visitation woodcut, as a *topos* or emblem.[75] The reference to the familiar visual image, with all its accepted meaning, could be startling, if the image appeared, as does the Visitation, in completely foreign circumstances - as the procuress, 'Mother Needham', and the young victim, in the Harlot's Progress, Plate One. (Perhaps an even more powerful reference of the same kind, in Hogarth, is his use of the familiar gestures of Christ, in the pietà, to express the last agonies of the Rake.) That this game with famous works of art can still work in the twentieth century is illustrated by a very recent drawing by the American artist, Greg Constantine (Pl. 69). Lisa and Leo at the Poolside is part of a set of drawings published as Leonardo Visits Los Angeles.[76] In the role of 'beach bum', and accompanied by Mona Lisa, the great artist enjoys a visit to Southern California, and pokes fun (sometimes literally) at the clichés of life in and around Hollywood. Criticism of the slick West Coast society by outsider Constantine is usually light-hearted, but in this drawing the adoption of the iconic poses from Michelangelo's 'Creation', has enormous shock value, and California is defined by the can of coke, the expensive sports cars, and the pool - and the old man and the girl, and the sign on the hillside behind them that reminds us that this life is all a moving picture-show - a world created by the ad men and the film directors, a travesty of creation, a world Post God. In a somewhat similar way, Samuel Colman seems to have borrowed a famous image from

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[75] Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1975), pp. 40-41.

[76] The book was published in New York in 1984; and, at the time this thesis was submitted, the drawing was on exhibition (as part of the Greg Constantine - Drawings show) at the OK Harris gallery, New York City.

Hogarth - the Garrick in the Character of Richard III which has been mentioned already - in order to make a 'remark' about Belshazzar's relevance to the political occurrences in Britain in his own day. In other words, Colman appears to have been using Hogarth's figure of Richard III as a topos, knowing that viewers in the 1830s would readily understand the relationship between the wicked Richard of York and (at least certain aspects of) the monarchs of their own era. If Colman saw Richard's representation by Shakespeare and Garrick and Hogarth as a suitable portrait of the last of a line of Babylonian kings, then clearly the Englishness of the Belshazzar type is being emphasized, and his evil (or mistaken) practices may be identified with those of the last of the Hanoverian kings.[77] Because it is not at all easy to decide just which evils Colman was pin-pointing, speculation about the date of Belshazzar's Feast takes on more importance than anyone might otherwise give to it; and this speculation again involves the intricate relationship of Colman's painting to John Martin's Belshazzar's Feast and to other works by Martin.

Even if he had not exhibited his celebrated and controversial Belshazzar's Feast in 1821, Martin would have been the most important influence on Colman's apocalyptic pictures. Himself inspired by Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, and by Turner, Martin began to arouse the admiration of the public in 1816, with his painting, Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon (United Grand Lodge of Great Britain). Martin's ability to give a convincing 'account' of biblical stories, with an emphasis on the power of God to direct toy-like armies and even the sky itself, was very exciting to most viewers. His spectacular reconstruction of the buildings of Babylon, and later of Nineveh had a verisimilitude which caught public attention; and his pictures defined catastrophic events for many people and helped to inspire writers such as Edwin Atherstone the poet and Bernard Barton the Quaker verse-maker (among other poets far too numerous to list here). Edward Bulwer-Lytton (whose Last Days of Pompeii was published in 1834) was a great admirer of Martin's paintings - and Martin, in turn, took inspiration from his friend's writing.[78] Among painters Martin had a large following too (although his style was not to the taste of the majority of his most important contemporaries). Admirers included David Roberts and Henry Dawson, and others ranging from the American poetic landscapist, Thomas Cole, to a host of engravers, churning out Martinesque illustrations for popular annuals.[79] In Colman's work, three of the five major apocalyptic pictures involve dominant architectural compositions. In The Destruction of the Temple and in The Edge of Doom the buildings simply appear to be generally related to Martin's. However, the layout of the great hall of his Belshazzar's palace demonstrates knowledge of Martin's painting (or one version of it) or of one of the engravings.[80]

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[77] Like Pizarro, Richard III was performed fairly regularly in Bristol. The Bristol Mercury advertised it, for instance, on 6 September 1824; 1 December 1825; and 14 June 1831.

Colman could have been among the thousands of poeple who saw Martin's painting when it was at the British Institution in 1821. (If he modelled his own pamphlet about St John Preaching in the Wilderness on Martin's descriptive leaflet about Belshazzar, then it seems reasonable to suppose that Colman visited either the British Institution exhibition or - even more likely - the show put on by Collins in the Strand, which was open during the Royal Academy season.) It is also quite probable that Colman saw Martin's painting when it was shown in Bristol in 1825 at the Gallery of Arts on St Augustine's Parade. In reference to this 'celebrated picture', the Mercury's 'Oracle of Fashion' quoted a current periodical as claiming that 'it becomes impossible for anyone possessed of a spark of imagination, not to be smitten with admiration and wonder'.[81] By 1826 Colman could have owned a mezzotint of Martin's painting, and by 1832 he could have bought a second-edition engraving.

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[78] See Balston, p 224.

[79] For further details, see Feaver, pp. 104-113.

[80] There are at least six versions of Belshazzar's Feast, apparently carried out by Martin himself (in addition to the engravings). See Balston, pp. 58 and 60, and also Christopher Johnstone, John Martin (London, 1974), p. 37.

A quick comparison of Colman's painting with the engraving of Martin's work shows the obvious features they share - the emphasis on deep space, for example, the inclusion of the Tower of Babel and the Temple of Bel, high up in the distance, above the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and of course the preposterous tables, along with numerous details of revellers, musicians, servants and ornaments. There is evidence to suggest however that Colman was also familiar with Martin's Fall of Nineveh (Pl. 68) - an enormous scene of frenzy and destruction in which Sardanapalus and his concubines prepare to go to their funeral pyre. The original oil painting was exhibited in solitary splendour at the Western Exchange in Old Bond Street in 1828, and Martin issued a mezzotint of the subject on 1 July 1830. With an uncanny and uncomfortable sense of occasion, he dedicated the print to Charles X of France (an admirer of his previous paintings). A few weeks later Charles was forced to abdicate his throne.

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[81] Bristol Mercury, 25 April 1825, p. 3, col. 2.

In the sixteen-page pamphlet published in conjunction with his painting, Martin described the architecture of Nineveh and its decoration: 'Upon the entablature of the palace may be seen, among other designs in basso-relievo, the representation of Semiramis on horse-back, fighting with a leopard'. His source of ideas for the sculpture groups and for the serpent capitals was a description by Herodotus of the Temple of Bel in Babylon.[82] In the foreground of Colman's Belshazzar's Feast there are bas-relief sculpture groups in niches on the walls. The group on the left resembles Ripa's emblem of Virtue in combat with Vice (Iconologia, p. 509). The scene on the right-hand wall shows a woman wearing a crown and striking at a leopard from the back of a rearing horse. This queen is evidently Semiramis, or Astarte, the Babylonian Venus, which makes it seem very likely that Colman knew Martin's pamphlet about Nineveh. By the painting of Nineveh, or by the mezzotint, Colman might have felt encouraged to position his royal group in the centre of the scene, rather than off to one side. The similarity of several of Colman's foreground figures (priests or courtiers in staffs and chains of office) to the priests or officials in the foreground of Martin's Nineveh also gives weight to the likelihood that the Semiramis motif was introduced to Colman through Martin's Nineveh, and therefore no earlier than 1828.

Colman may also have known Martin's Queen Esther. The original banquet scene was a watercolour, exhibited in 1831 and later engraved by Martin's son Alfred (Pl. 67). It was also engraved by Finden and published in the Forget-Me-Not for 1831. The 'annuals' were reviewed faithfully by the newspapers and other periodicals in those days, and the Bristol Mercury made particular mention of Martin's Queen Esther in an article dated 9 November 1830 (p. 4, col. 1). It seems very possible that Colman drew from this source for his snake-decorated beams above Belshazzar's dining hall, and for the deep, back-lit open-air courtyard behind the throne. (Martin's Belshazzar's Feast takes place in an open foreground courtyard, with an enclosed hall beyond it.) The enormous throne in Colman's painting, and the vast curtains to each side of it are also suggested in Martin's Queen Esther - although in this case Martin's composition and its elaborate details are quiet and even classical in comparison with the outrageous magnificence devised by Colman. In this case one might say that Colman up-staged Martin.[83]

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[82] Martin's library on ancient cities included works by Herodotus, Josephus and Plutarch, besides Bonomi's Nineveh and its Palaces. See Balston, pp. 267 and 268.

One further possible visual impetus to Colman to produce his own Belshazzar's Feast (or to a patron to commission a Colman version of the subject) could have been given by the diorama by Hippolyte Sebron which was based on Martin's painting and shown in London at the Royal

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[83] Martin's Queen Esther pays open tribute, in a number of its details (including the foreground servant, the curtains, the prominence of the heavy columns) to Poussin's Sacrament of Penance, which is one of the Seven Sacraments by Poussin now on loan to the National Galleries of Scotland from the Duke of Sutherland's collection. Martin could have seen the collection at Cleveland House, in London. Colman, of course, could also have made arrangements to see the pictures; and the position of the table in his Belshazzar's Feast does tempt one to consider this possibility. However, there do not appear to be other Poussin-inspired motifs in Colman's painting - apart from the servants, who look more likely to have been drawn from Martin than from Poussin. The subject of Martin's picture is almost certain to have interested Colman. Although the violence in the drama of Esther takes place off-stage, Esther herself is a biblical symbol of deliverance, an instrument in the vindication of God's people, a force for good, like Cyrus, or like Daniel.

Bazaar on Oxford Street in 1833, much to the chagrin of Martin himself.[84]

Judging Colman's Belshazzar's Feast by its self-proclaimed connections with the work of John Martin, it would appear to have been painted not earlier than the autumn of 1830 and possibly (but not probably) as late as 1833. Taking local political considerations into account, the painting would seem to convey the tone of feeling of 1831. These years represent a period of high political tension and social upheaval, both nationally and internationally, and a time of real crisis for Bristol. During this period feelings continued to be strongly divided about the political affiliations of Roman Catholics. Throughout 1831 and the first half of 1832 there was a frenzy of debate on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, with a return after the passing of the Reform Bill to the specific 'grievances' experienced by Dissenters, even under the new law. The anti-slavery movement seems to have been at its most dynamic in 1830 but it was still being covered extensively in the Bristol newspapers in the early months of 1831. All this means that the invitation seemingly extended by Colman in his picture of Belshazzar's Feast, to see his biblical characters as metaphors of his real-life contemporaries, is not entirely impossible to accept if one asks who would have been catching the artist's attention in 1830 or 1831 in connection with anti-slavery, and who would have been likely to influence Colman during the same general time-period in regard to Reform - and so on.

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[84] See Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, L.J.M. Daguerre (New York, 1968), p. 45.

If one takes Belshazzar's Feast as a representation of deliverance from slavery, it is important to remember that men as different as James Stephen and William Thorp associated calamities and upheavals at a national level with God's judgement on those who involved themselves with the slave trade. If, as I have suggested, Colman's painting ought to be viewed as a warning, then it may be that the figure of the king should be seen as William IV. This being the case, Daniel may be the Revd Thorp, if he is not one of the nationally-known campaigners in the cause of the slaves - Wilberforce, or Clarkson, or Thomas Fowell Buxton. Guessing at the part being acted out by the Cyrus figure, one is reminded that while throughout the years of his fellow Israelites' captivity in Babylon, Daniel remained their example and their advocate, Cyrus was a foreign protector, used by God as his agent. 'I have raised him up in righteousness and I will direct his ways', says God of Cyrus (Isaiah 45.13), 'and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward'. If Colman remembered this text it would be appropriate to search for a modern analogue for Cyrus among contemporaries of Colman who were new-comers to the cause of Abolition, or at least not people who were committed to anti-slavery over a lifetime. Protheroe comes to mind, since he was essentially a politician, rather than a humanitarian. John Hare, Jr is another candidate, especially if the picture is intended to have particular meaning for Bristol. On the other hand, there is an equal likelihood that the warrior-figure is meant to be read as a national political hero.

Looking for a Reform analogy in Colman's painting, one is immediately tempted to assign Edward Protheroe to the role of Daniel, since for a short time he did represent the pro-Reform party of Bristol in the House of Commons. The choice of those who would have been seen as modern-day Cyrus figures is much more open. The Bristol Mercury provided its readers (of p. 2 of the 15 March 1831 issue) with lists of those members of Parliament who were for and against the principle of Reform. Those in favour included Lord John Russell, Viscount Althorp, The Marquis of Tavistock, Viscount Palmerston and many others. Among those opposed to Reform (and therefore taking the parts of 'soothsayers' and courtiers in the Feast of Belshazzar, perhaps) were Sir Charles Wetherell (the Recorder of Bristol), Mr Spencer Percival, Sir Robert Peel, Mr Hart Davis and the Marquis of Stafford.

The most interesting symbolism in Belshazzar's Feast is the assortment of motifs which appear to have a bearing on Roman Catholicism and/or on the vexed subject of the relationship in England of Church and State.

The overwhelming size of the table in Colman's picture invites attention to the objects laid out on it for Belshazzar's banquet. These include the predictable 'golden vessels' and serving trays. In the precise centre, directly in front of Belshazzar, is a cluster of candlesticks. What first appears remarkable about the feast - aside from the scale - is the absence of any food on the central or side tables, apart from a generous supply of grapes and what appear to be walnuts. One might be inclined, if looking at a painting by a less symbol-conscious artist, to accept the scene at face value as showing the end of a stylish meal. The wine and the walnuts, and the decorative bunches of grapes would be quite appropriate, and quite in keeping with English tradition. However, the symbolic value of the grapes and the walnuts cannot be discounted. In western art grapes are traditional symbols of the Eucharist. With wheat, they allude to the wine which is believed by Catholics to turn into the blood of Christ during the sacrament of the Mass, and to the bread which becomes his body. In paintings of the Madonna and Child, a bunch of grapes symbolizes his Passion.[85] Walnuts (and those on the table in Colman's painting look like Royal Walnuts, or common walnuts, complete with tender green rinds) are traditional symbols of Christ. The soft outer case represents the flesh of the Saviour, the hard brown shell is a symbol of his strength, and Christ's divinity-within-humanity is symbolized by the kernel.[86]

'I am the light of the world', said Jesus (John 8.12). Candles have always been familiar symbols in Christian iconography, reminding worshippers of Christ's presence at the Eucharist. Chalice-shaped drinking cups are common references to the communion ceremony; while basins (being carried to the table in this scene by the servants) are reminders of

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[85] There is a very beautiful example in the National Gallery in Washington: Gerard David's Rest on the Flight into Egypt (c. 1510). The Christ child eagerly accepts a bunch of green grapes.

[86] See Mirella Levi d'Ancona, The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting (Florence, 1977), pp. 245-250. This cites medieval and Renaissance authorities. See also below, Chapter Seven, footnote 67. Morton Paley believes the fruit I have identified as walnuts may be apples or unripe peaches, or even small green plums of a variety he has seen being served with drinks in Turkey. He has suggested to me (in a letter dated 24 June 1985) that the plums may be traditional after-dinner fare in the Middle East, and that Colman may have known that it was the habit of the people of Belshazzar's day to supply such fruit at banquets. Green pears and green figs are also popular (when in season) in Turkey, according to Dr Paley, and served with drinks too. However, walnuts are widely appreciated in the Middle East. J.C. Loudon, in An Encyclopaedia of Trees and Shrubs (London, 1842), claimed that the tree came from Persia and that its fruit was 'much in demand throughout Europe and other parts of the world . . . In a young and green state it is pickled and preserved' (p. 733) to be used 'at the dessert for the richer classes'. See also W.J. Bean, Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles, 8th edition, 4 vols (London, 1978), II, 476-7. Bean confirms the popularity of the 'soft unripe fruits', eaten pickled.

Christ's bathing of his disciples' feet, and of the associated washing away of sin. On the balconies high up on either side of the hall, musicians play on harps. These instruments are customary attributes of King David the Psalmist and symbolize praise of God - just as prayer is usually represented by incense pots (seen, for example, near the young warrior in the foreground), and faith in God's word is often symbolized by the 'serpent of brass' which in this painting appears as Babylonian decorations on various poles and staffs in the hall.[87] A throne is normally a symbol of God's majesty, His eternal kingship.

Unmistakably, Belshazzar's Feast is a horrible travesty of the Last Supper. All the objects normally associated with Christ have been taken over by the forces of evil. The sacred meal has been transformed into a vulgar carousal, at which the guests overturn their cups and fall asleep at table, lulled, we may assume, by profane music. Prayers ascend to a heathen god, and a cowardly and blasphemous king sits at the head of the table. The comparison between the two events is a bold one, a vivid way of stressing the sheer filthiness of Babylon.

Again, it is extremely likely that Colman intended his viewers to go beyond making a simple comparison between pagan idolatry and Christian worship. He may also have meant the outrageous banqueting table to represent the opulence of the Roman Church (or of a 'Romish' Church of England) and the sacrilege which placed a man (Pope or King) at the head of that church, usurping Christ's place and perverting Christianity. Though he uses imagery which suggests a familiarity with traditional (medieval and Renaissance) Christian iconography, Colman is almost certain to have found extremely distasteful the combination of candles and incense with the grapes and walnuts, as symbols of the Communion. The celebration of the Lord's Supper at Castle Green or at Zion Chapel would have been a simple service, at which no need would have been felt for elaborate candelabra or pots of incense.

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[87] See Numbers 21.9. One such pole can be seen falling from the hand of the man on the right of the central podium in Belshazzar's Feast.

Donald Davie has stressed, in his study of the cultural affiliations of Dissenters, that 'despite their insistence on "the preaching of the word", dissenters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contrary to what is supposed, laid very great stress on the sacrament of the Lord's supper'.[88] The ceremony continued to be important to them in the nineteenth century, and Davie mentions the Revd Robert Hall as one Baptist minister with a strong concern for the doctrine of the Eucharist. In Chapter Four I noted David Wilkie's interest in the Lord's Supper as 'defined' by John Knox. At Zion Chapel in Bristol the Communion service was obviously considered important too; the Minute Book contains an entry for 6 January 1833 which records that on that day the 'ordinance of the Lord's Supper' was first held in the chapel. So there is the strong implication in Belshazzar's Feast that Colman is presenting a sermon which has, as one of its 'heads' a deeply felt statement about the meaning of worship and of the relationship of church to secular authority.

If Colman was still a regular attender of Castle Green Chapel at the time he painted Belshazzar's Feast, and if his pastor's views about the Church of England were important to him, then one must be cautious about reading 'disestablishment propaganda' into the picture.

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[88] Davie, A Gathered Church, p. 65.

Thorp was definitely not one with those Dissenters in Bristol who resented the existence of a State Church. In The Destinies of the British Empire (page 76) he warned:

> If national churches are the daughters of the great harlot, many dissenting churches are her grand-daughters. Bigotted dissenters, infidel revolutionists, and atheistical radicals, rejoice in the prospect of the downfall of national churches; supposing that when they are swept from the face of the earth, the condition of the nations will be vastly ameliorated; but in this they err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God; for when they fall in the final visitation, the nations will fall also; the little stone shall break them to pieces, and beat them to powder, and no place shall be found for them.

This he stated in spite of a pronouncement on the next page: 'But have we not been guilty of a dereliction of our protestant principles and of an identification of our most vital interests with those of the papacy, from the commencement of the late war to the present period?' This patriotic brand of Protestantism, which fought for a united Protestant consciousness in Britain, accepting the status quo in regard to the monarch's headship of the Church of England, was a characteristic of Thorp which puzzled one newspaper columnist in 1828. This writer was angry because 'it is impossible to walk the city without hearing on every side the inflated eulogies that are pronounced on the speech of the Rev. Mr. Thorp'.[89] The article goes on to condemn Thorp for his friendliness towards the Established Church, when that Church made a mockery of him, as a minister, by denying him authority (to carry out the marriage service, for example). The columnist adds that Thorp believes that the True Church will one day 'descend from heaven, clad with celestial beauty, when the millstone of infallibility has sunk the Papal hierarchy'. However, comments the newspaper writer, 'as a dissenter, he ought to have added the Protestant hierarchy'.

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[89] Bristol Mercury, 19 August 1828, p. 3, col. 1.

Edward Irving preached at Castle Green Chapel on the evening of Tuesday, 29 August 1830. The Bristol Gazette reported the occasion: 'The Rev. Edward Irving of London, the eccentric and celebrated preacher, visited this city on Tuesday last, on his way to Dublin, and in the evening delivered a characteristic discourse at the Rev. William Thorp's chapel, in Castle-green. A collection was made for the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, which amounted to £23'.[90] This event took place just a few days after Colman had advertised the exhibition of his 'The Israelites' Passage through the Red Sea'; but, even at what may have been a busy time, one cannot suppose that he would have missed an opportunity to hear Irving preach. Therefore it is not beyond the limits of possibility that Colman's Daniel, in Belshazzar's Feast, was modelled on Irving - provided (since Irving was no Liberal) that one looks at Daniel as a forerunner of nineteenth-century evangelism, and of latter-day prophets, rather than as a reformer on a purely political level.

Another person whose opinions may have carried weight with Samuel Colman was Joseph Cottle. There is no available information about any exchange of views between the two men, but they were fellow members of Zion Chapel by the beginning of 1833, and may have been acquainted earlier. The fact of Colman's having sketched Firfield House (the home of Cottle's sister and brother-in-law) gives some encouragement to the notion that Colman could count the Hares and Cottle among his friends.[91]

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[90] 8 September 1830, p. 3, col. 2.

Joseph Cottle was a little offended (certainly pained) by the tone of the debate about the Church. In a letter to John Foster, dated March 1830, he told his friend:

> You seem to consider the establishment as combined with unmitigated evil. I, on the contrary, regard it, with all its faults (by which I shall certainly please neither party), as productive of a great preponderance of good; nor, on the whole, do I ever desire to see the day, when there shall be no establishment; or rather an establishment of Independents, Methodists, or Baptists. . . . Scholars and gentlemen, as the generality of clergymen are, although many of them may not have attained to a knowledge of the truth, in its highest sense, they still soften the charities of life, and being scattered through the thinly-peopled districts, convey a knowledge of Christianity . . . where, otherwise, it is to be feared, there would be heathenish darkness. . . . With these views, it is always painful to my mind to hear harsh and indiscriminate reflexions passed on the establisment. 92

Foster sent back a very long explanation of his own point of view.[93] This was friendly, somewhat sardonic, and a full and firm denunciation of the clergy and of the principle of church establishment. He began by taking Cottle to task for being the kind of Dissenter who professed nonconformity 'only as a matter of habit, from the accidents of association,

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91 Dr Basil Cottle, who is descended from a collateral branch of Joseph's family, is preparing a comprehensive biography of the publisher-poet. Dr Cottle has very kindly supplied me with sections of his typescript which have a bearing on my interest in Bristol contemporaries of Colman. However, he has not found any documents among the Cottle papers which refer to Samuel Colman.

92 Cottle's letter to Foster is quoted in full as a footnote in Ryland, Life and Correspondence of John Foster, II, 165-67.

93 His letter, also dated March 1830, appears in Ryland, II, 165-79. The passage which follows is taken from pp. 168-69.

locality, preference for a certain mode of preaching'. Then he set out his reasons for conscientious Dissent:

> The fundamental principle of dissent is, that the religion of Christ ought to be left to make its way among mankind in the greatest possible simplicity, by its own truth and excellence; and through the labours of sincere and pious advocates, under the presiding care of its great Author; and that it cannot, without fatal injury to that pure simplicity, that character of being a 'kingdom not of this world,' be taken into the schemes and political arrangements of monarchs and statesmen, and implicated inseparably with all the secular interests, intrigues and passions. It is self-evident it must thus become a sharer in state-corruptions, an engine of state acted on, and in its turn acting with, every bad influence belonging so almost universally to courts, governments, and ambitious parties of worldly men.

Surely Belshazzar's Feast is Samuel Colman's restatement, of precisely these convictions. The warrior Cyrus looks as if he is in Belshazzar's banqueting hall with the very purpose of destroying the unhallowed and unhappy communion of the king and his ministers. Intriguingly, as Morton Paley has recognized, Cyrus advances 'much in the spirit of Blake's Los, who wants to "overthrow their cup,/ Their bread, their altar-table, their incense & their oath"'.[94]

The idea of Belshazzar's Feast as a political metaphor is supported by the history of John Martin's earlier version of the subject and its reception by the public.

Martin was definitely a Radical. An admirer of Robert Burns, Martin became thoroughly excited over the prospect of the extension of the franchise and of democratic freedom. 'During the season of the great combustion about the Reform Bill, little Martin, the painter, took violently to politics', remarked an acquaintance.[95] Though Martin had once hissed at the National Anthem, his Belshazzar's Feast is probably not so much a denunciation of the British Monarchy as a warning to the Government to pay attention to the needs and wishes of the people. He dedicated the first edition of his Belshazzar engraving to George IV and the second to William IV - gestures which certainly did not go unnoticed, though they were not necessarily taken very seriously. Charles Lamb conjured up a pen-picture of a vulgar party at Brighton Pavilion at which George IV had a hoax played on his guests by introducing to them on a huge transparency the glittering message, 'Brighton - Earthquake - Swallow-up-alive'.[96]

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[94] The Blake quotation is from Jerusalem 91: 12-13, cited in The Apocalyptic Sublime, Colman section.

In Bristol, critics of the flamboyant George IV had been righteously indignant over the extravagant coronation celebrations held in their city on the nineteenth of July 1821. 'In the afternoon there was a dinner at the Assembly Rooms, the Mayor presiding, after which the company were called upon to drink 35 toasts, that of "Our Glorious and inestimable Constitution in Church and State" being followed by the glee, "With a Jolly Full Bottle"'.[97] So strong was the feeling against the king in some quarters that on the Sunday following the coronation, Prebendary Randolph, 'then in residence at the Cathedral, took as the text of his sermon two verses from the Book of Daniel, beginning: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords", and ending with a reference to the said monarch's "wives and concubines"'.

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[95] Balston, John Martin, p. 164, quoting Charles MacFarlane's Reminiscences of a Literary Life.

[96] 'The Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art', Athenaeum, January 1833. See The Essays of Elia, introduced by Alfred Ainger (London, 1899), pp. 303-315.

[97] This, and the next quotation, are from Latimer, p. 92. See also the Bristol Mercury, 28 July 1821, p. 4, col. 2.

Before these events, a leading article in the Bristol Mercury, on 16 June 1821, under the heading, 'Coronation', complained:

> Feasts and festivities, and fetes, and luxurious living, purple and fine linen, journeys of pleasure or of state, splendid spectacles and costly ceremonies, enter into no part of the real happiness of the country at large . . . all these contemptible frivolities must be eventually paid for out of the ill-requited labour of the industrious classes. The fact is, that labour, which is itself prosperity, and the root and foundation of all other property, seems doomed to be the pack horse - the beast of burden (p. 3, cols 2 and 3).

Conscience-stricken, perhaps, many rich people in Britain gave banquets for the poor on their estates on Coronation Day. In Bristol, while, as the Mercury reported, 'At Hare & Sons, Temple-gate, a crown G.R. with variegated lamps surrounded with laurel' was prominently displayed in celebration of the national festival, there was also a strong sign of Hare sensitivity to the gap between riches and poverty:

> Among the novelties which occupied public attention on the Coronation day, nothing was more gratifying than the Entertainment given by Mr. John Hare, Jun. to 100 of the poorest old men and women in this city . . . A good dinner of old English fare was provided at the Tick Hall, where they all encircled one table, with the oldest man, aged 89, at the head, dressed in the helmet, &c. worn by the Champion at the Coronation of King Charles the First. 98

In 1830, it seems, the sympathies of the family were still with The People. After the news of that summer's French Revolution reached Bristol, John Hare and his son John were both among those who signed a

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98 This quotation, and the reference to the decoration at the factory, are from the Bristol Mercury, 28 July 1821, p. 3, cols 3 and 4.

petition to the Mayor, John Savage, asking him to call a public meeting to express admiration for the people of France.[99]

For the moment the absence of documentary evidence about Colman's political affiliations denies us any categorical identification of Belshazzar's Feast with one point of view or another. In summary, however, it can be said that the painting is not simply an entertainment, and that there are strong indications that it shows Colman in the light of a critic of the established Church and as a 'political Congregationalist', keen to see the passage of a Reform Bill, as well as the emancipation of slaves overseas.

As indicated earlier, Samuel Colman's other three large paintings of calamitous events do not appear to be tied as definitely to particular biblical episodes as either The Delivery of Israel or Belshazzar's Feast. They also appear to give emphasis, above everything else, to anti-Catholic imagery, and to events of the future, as described by Bible prophets, whereas the two pictures already examined concentrate on past events, typical apocalypses. In the remaining pages of this chapter I shall point to some of the imagery Colman uses in the three 'judgment' pictures to underline his convictions about the evils of Roman Catholicism. Although all three paintings will be looked at briefly, The Coming of the Messiah will be given more attention than the others, because there are some hints within the picture that it may reflect contemporary events and his fellow Bristolians' opinions with more precision than the others.

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[99] See the Bristol Mercury, 7 September 1830, p. 3, col. 2.

Stylistically, The Coming of the Messiah (Pl. 79) gives the impression of being earlier than the other four major paintings. The marked 'ghostliness' of many of the figures in The Delivery of Israel, Belshazzar's Feast, and The Destruction of the Temple, caused by their having been laid in over dark paint in light tints, does not appear to any great degree in this picture. In composition, this large painting shares some of its landscape features with St John Preaching - a point mentioned in Chapter Two. On the other hand, The Edge of Doom which is inscribed with the dates 1836 and 1838, shows no penchant for pale, wraith-like figures, while a later picture, Laying the Foundation Stone (Pl. 108) which is dated 1837, does exhibit this odd characteristic. It seems fair to suppose that Colman's technique varied; and, as regards the compositional similarities between this painting and the 1821 St John Preaching, these may surely be explained by a fondness on Colman's part for a particular model - in the work of another artist, perhaps, or in local geography transformed by the experience of looking at other people's paintings or engravings. For the purposes of this chapter, it would be very gratifying to know when The Coming of the Messiah was carried out, because the foreground figure of the kneeling king, and the distant scene in which a city is being attacked and evidently destroyed both invite interpretation as emblems which Colman would have wanted his viewers to understand in contemporary terms.

If the picture is to be dated to 1830 or later, it is feasible that the king bowing humbly in the foreground and removing his crown, is Charles X of France, a Catholic king, who was forced to abdicate in the summer of 1830. As I have already noted, Revd Thorp was not alone in believing that the Bible prophesied the downfall of rulers who associated themselves with 'idolatry' and other forms of corruptions.

One strong temptation to believe that Colman's painting of the downfall of Babylon dates from mid 1830 or afterwards is the fact that he combines imagery from the Bible - from Isaiah and from Revelation - in a manner very suggestive of William Thorp's sermons on the Destinies of the British Empire. If this is a false clue (since of course the texts were frequently cited, with differing interpretations) there may be a pertinent similarity between the painting and a statement made in public in Bristol in 1831. According to the Bristol Mercury of 3 October 1831 (p. 3, col. 4), the third annual meeting of the Reformation Society of Bristol was opened with a very optimistic report on the progress of the Society's schools and of their preaching among the city's poor. The local society was working hard for the 'glorious consummation contemplated by the parent society - to be instrumental in hastening that day when an emancipated world shall be enabled to exclaim, "Babylon the great is fallen, fallen"'. Members were urged to work even harder, 'that the energies of all true Protestants might be concentrated and embodied in one grand effort to penetrate into the centre of that phalanx of popery and infidelity which is arrayed against us, and to plant the banner of Christ in the thickest ranks of the enemy'. One is certainly encouraged by these words to look more closely at the battle-scene in The Coming of the Messiah. The figures are tiny - so minute, in fact, that it is extremely difficult to see just what is going on. However, it is clear that a battalion of foot soldiers in nineteenth-century costume is ascending a ramp which leads to the city. Behind the soldiers marches a robed figure, wearing a mitre and carrying a crozier and a bundle of books. Is this the 'phalanx of popery and infidelity' mentioned in the Reformation Society report? Inside the city walls, the action seems to centre on the statue of a female figure, poised on a sphere which is supported by a high plinth. The figure holds a trumpet, and at the base of the statue there are people with other musical instruments - a cymbal, perhaps, and a lyre. Combatants on horseback and on foot converge on the statue. Those coming from the left are in armour, Roman in style, to appearances, while the army approaching from the right does not seem to be in uniform, and raises a crucifix above the heads of the fighters.[100] There is the strong implication, here, that the people making music in the midst of all this confusion are celebrating with joy the proclamation that 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen'.

Hidden in this picture, too, may be Samuel Colman's personal response to the Bristol Riots.

The riots need not be described in detail here. As the worst disturbances of their kind since the late eighteenth century, they were given full coverage in the newspapers of the period.[101] However, several details are worth attention.

The riots broke out during the weekend of October 29 and 30, 1831. They were directly attributable to the unpopularity of Sir Charles

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[100] I am grateful to Francis Greenacre for supplying me with details about the battle-scene, which he examined closely in April 1985.

[101] See the Bristol Mirror for 5 November 1831, pp. 3 and 4. See also Felix Farley's Bristol Journal for the same date. W.H. Somerton, the editor of the Bristol Mercury, published A Narrative of the Bristol Riots late in 1831 and the Revd Eagles's version of the story was published in Bristol a few months afterwards. For a modern study see Susan Thomas, The Bristol Riots (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1974).

Wetherell, the Recorder of Bristol, who came to the city on the 29th to preside over the Court of Assizes. Wetherell was MP for Boroughbridge in Yorkshire, a 'rotten' borough, which was due to disappear as a parliamentary seat under the terms of the Reform Bill, so it is hardly surprising that he stood in oppostion to the Bill. His vote against it in late September was known to the Bristol populace, who resented not only his Tory politics but his having misrepresented Bristol in a speech in which he had claimed he spoke for the city's liberal members of Parliament. Sir Charles's visit to Bristol brought to a head the anger of a largely Whig citizenry who were desperate for reform at a local level. Taxes were high and the municipal corporation of the city notoriously extravagant and corrupt, with an enormous imbalance between the ruling Tories and the Whigs. Alderman Pinney, the Mayor, was in the embarrassing position of being a Whig and a pro-Reformer at the head of a council which supported reactionary interests, including those of the established Church and of the West India aristocracy.

The city fathers suspected that Wetherell's arrival in Bristol would cause trouble. They attempted to enlist the help of the recently founded Political Union (identified with radical interests) in keeping the mob quiet. However, when William Herapath, the leader of the Union, discovered that armed forces had been ordered out for the protection of Wetherell and his entourage, he wrote to Alderman Daniel:

> When the conversation occurred between us on Saturday, respecting the entrance of Sir Charles Wetherell, I was not aware of the intention of the City Authorities to employ an armed force for the protection of a Judge of the land - a course unprecedented, I believe, in English history. It has produced effects upon the Council of the Union which the Magistrates alone must be answerable for. However, I feel confident that no

member of the union will be found committing outrages on that day. 102

Outrages did occur, but Tory accusations against Political Unionists appear to have been unfounded, and in fact Herapath issued an anti-riot poster on Sunday morning, 30 October. It was headed 'Bristol General Union' and told the people that Wetherell had left the city and that 'Outrages only injure the course of reform'.[103]

The rioters were mostly local unemployed whose resentments were fuelled by the wine from the Mansion House, raided early in the disturbances, when skirmishes broke out between the crowd and the inexperienced Special Constables appointed to control them. During the two nights of fierce looting and burning these constables and three separate troops of soldiers were commissioned to put an end to the trouble. Such was the inefficiency and timidity of the Corporation and the lack of coordination between the civil and military leaders that the troops could do nothing to stop the rioting and merely added to the wrath of the people. (The man who was supposed to be in charge of the troops, Col. Brereton, was later tried for incompetence and committed suicide during the course of his court-martial.) In the anarchy of 29 and 30 October the Mansion House was destroyed and several of the city's prisons set on fire. The Council House was also attacked and the Bishop's Palace burned to the ground. Ironically the people who were most positive in the bid to prevent further destruction were a Quaker who tried to stop the sacking of the Bridewell gaol, and another Dissenter, a Mr Ralph,

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102 This letter, dated 26 October 1831, is quoted in Somerton, p. 8.

103 The poster is reproduced in Thomas, opp. p. 23.

who saved the Cathedral from burning when boys threw firebrands into the Chapter House on the Sunday night. Somerton's account claims that 'the Right Rev. the Bishop, who happened to have been in the town during the previous week withdrew from the city in the middle of the day; and as a measure of precaution, the most valuable of his effects had been removed'.[104] Fresh in the Bishop's mind would have been the knowledge of the attempt made by some unidentified subversive force to demonstrate against the visit to the city by the Bishop of Bath and Wells on 24 October to open a new church in Bedminster. The bishop was an opponent of the Reform Bill, and on that occasion notices had been posted around Bristol encouraging folk to 'Receive him with every demonstration that becomes his exalted rank, and late Vote in the House of Lords'.[105]

After these comments on the riots it almost goes without saying that Samuel Colman's inclusion in The Coming of the Messiah of a bishop and of a party of militiamen may just possibly refer to the events in Bristol of October 1831. The soldiers may represent Captain Codrington's Yeomanry, who were turned back home (towards Doddington) because no one in authority in Bristol seemed to have work for them to do on the Sunday of the disturbances. The bishop may be Bishop Gray of Bristol. It is certainly not totally outside the bounds of possibility that the bishop and the soldiers symbolize a hated alliance of anti-reformers, commanded by state and ecclesiastical agencies.

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[104] Somerton, p. 8.

[105] See Thomas, p. 18.

The most unequivocal expressions of anti-Catholicism in Colman's paintings occur in The Destruction of the Temple and in The Edge of Doom. Only because the details of these allusions are not immediately noticeable in a reproduction need they be described at all.

The subject of The Destruction of the Temple (Pl. 89) is not really the devastation of Jerusalem or of the Temple (though events from the day of Christ's crucifixion are apparently also included) but the Second Coming of Jesus and his Last Judgement of human-kind as foretold by Christ in St Matthew's Gospel. The overall implications of the picture will be discussed later, in Section D; for the moment the anti-Catholic symbolism is what must be pin-pointed.

The scene is set in a great Gothic cathedral which is collapsing; and in fact the centre aisle is roofless, so that 'every eye' can see the bright light and the little cloud in the sky, which signal the return of Christ. In the foreground is a king who lays down sceptre and crown, and bows 'at the name of Jesus' like the king in The Coming of the Messiah. On the right is illustrated the parable of the ten virgins, wise and foolish, ready and unready, while in the foreground Colman has introduced key figures from the story of Christ's Passion: Judas Iscariot (with a rope around his neck), Pilate washing his hands, soldiers quarrelling over Christ's garments. This may refer to the text in Revelation 1.7 which prophesies: 'Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him'. Beyond, and to the right of this group a large 'Book of Marty[rs]' can be recognized in the confusion of figures. A man in a minister's gown stands with his back to the viewer, holding aloft a large volume, very probably the Bible. In the distance, where the altar of this 'temple' would normally stand, there is a lurid glow, as from an enormous bonfire. The empty cross breaks from its shaft and a bishop, seen in silhouette, drops his crozier and reels with outstretched arms against the red light of the wrath of God.

At the end of the long feast table can be seen an angel with a spear driving from under the tumbling archway a man in priestly robes who holds up two keys and a bishop's staff. These symbols of office count for nothing on a day when Christ alone is Priest and King. His church stands secure in the form of the building on the right, with the True Vine flourishing on its walls. It is to be noted that near this building the Foolish Virgins carry rosaries, while the Wise Virgins read from a book by the light of their candles.

Above the scene of chaos minute angels assemble around the luminous 'sign of the son of man' (Matthew 24.30) to 'gather together his elect from the four winds' (verse 31), or to shake the 'powers of the heavens' (verse 29). Rocks tumble down from the sky and graves open to release 'many bodies of the saints which slept', as on the day Christ himself arose from the dead (Matthew 27.52,53. Compare I Thessalonians 4.16-18). Looking again towards the site of the altar, one can see, falling among the rocks and broken masonry and crucifixes, a huge altarpiece depicting the Immaculate Conception.[106] Colman must have regarded this famous painting by Guido Reni as an apt symbol of Papist idolatry, to be cast 'into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone' (Revelation 21.8).

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[106] The painting can be identified as one now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, but once in the Cleveland House Collection. Colman may have known it, or he may have known an engraving.

'There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ', states the Savoy Declaration (the 'confession of faith' of Congregationalists), 'nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God, whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming'.[107]

The Edge of Doom (Pl. 116) which bears the dates 1836 and 1838, was painted, in all likelihood, as one further and perhaps final, expression of Samuel Colman's fundamental opposition to Popery and of his confidence that it would collapse at the end of time.

The painting illustrates the headlong fall of Father Time, with scythe and hour-glass, tumbling backwards from a world which is being completely destroyed in a total architectural and geological upheaval. Buildings of various styles and uses crumble, and costly ornaments and furnishings fly out from between columns. 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it,' warns Psalm 127. This text is echoed by Shakespeare's prophecy, quoted from Prospero's famous speech in The Tempest, Act IV, scene 1; Colman has reproduced the speech in the picture on the plinth of the statue of the Bard in the foreground:

> The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And like the baseless fabric of a vision,
> Leave not a rack behind.

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[107] The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, 1658 (London, 1971), p. 37.

(The statue, and the quotation appear together in the familiar memorial by Scheemakers in Westminster Abbey.) The hidden message may be the advice of Jesus to the people in His Sermon on the Mount: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven' (Matthew 6.19,20).

How Shakespeare comes to 'stand upright' when, as the Psalmist boasts, those who 'trust in chariots . . . and in horses . . . are brought down and fallen' (Psalm 20.7,8) is not immediately obvious. It is clear, however, that the overturned carriage (which is a brougham and therefore the latest model of Colman's day) is a sign that the painting is meant to have application to modern times, while the Colosseum, swept from its foundations and hurtling into the furnace in the centre of the scene, is a token of the destruction of long-standing symbols of pagan civilization.

Out of pagan Rome grew papal Rome. The lust of the popes for wealth would have been something Colman would have heard about often. (He would have feared the tendency towards a love of wealth in the Church of England, as viewed by many of his contemporaries among nonconformists. Even Joseph Cottle admitted to Foster - in the letter quoted above - that he was 'no advocate for frippery and popish decorations, and ordinances; immense revenues to dronish bishops, while the inferior clergy are often worse paid than mechanics'.)[108] 'Treasures upon earth' were seen by Protestants as an enormous affront to Christ, so it is not surprising to find included in their destruction a painting that had associations with both ancient and modern Rome. In the foreground, beside the overturned figure of Time, is a miniature version by Colman of Guido Reni's famous ceiling painting in the Casino Rospigliosi Pallavacini in Rome, painted in 1614 for Cardinal Scipio Borghese. It shows Apollo riding in his chariot with Dawn before him and the Hours dancing by his side. A false and presumptuous god, Apollo (with all that he stands for) is dealt with here in no uncertain terms. I find this particular reference to be one of the most exciting in Colman's work. It is very rich in implied meanings and I shall discuss the various allusions in Section D because they seem more weighted on the side of the artist's interest in light and redemption than of his acknowledgement of darkness and condemnation.

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[108] See Ryland, II, pp. 165-67.

In summary of this chapter, it can be said that Samuel Colman's paintings give abundant evidence of his aversion to Roman Catholicism. This, however, is merely the dark side of the artist's Protestantism, and the paintings should always be seen as contrasts between the condemnation of evil - the warning to the wicked, which is the doom-saying business of a prophet - and the promise of hope in Christ's love, which is the light part of his burden. It can be said, too, that Colman's 'apocalyptic' paintings also demonstrate his interests to have included pro-Dissenting activity and political pressure, as well as anti-Catholic propaganda and prophesying.

If one searches for a suitable definition of Samuel Colman, one cannot conclude that he sympathized completely with his minister, William Thorp. Nor is there evidence that he was open in his political dissent, like Revd Good. Perhaps, after all, he was a 'passionate moderate', which is how I label Richard Ash of Cotham, who 'rejoiced' in Catholic Emancipation, yet took a vigorous part in Bristol in the activities of the Reformation Society.[109] Colman's paintings - certainly those discussed in this chapter - appear 'passionate'. Yet, as I shall show in Chapter Seven, he could also paint delightfully whimsical and poetic scenes, and others which suggest devotion to God and a will to praise God through his pictures. This view of Colman modifies the impression of a stern 'enthusiast' which is almost inevitably given by the five apocalyptic scenes which have been the subjects of this chapter.

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[109] See coverage of a speech by Ash, Bristol Mirror, 3 October 1831, p. 3, cols 4 and 5.

SECTION C

The Prophet as Psalmist

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Rock of Salvation and the Fountain of Life - Colman's poetic landscapes examined as hymns of praise

In 1984, when watercolours by Samuel Colman came to light, the personality of the artist grew - flowered, one might go so far as to say - so that he now appears as more than an Independent 'preacher' and 'prophet'. He was also a 'poet', a 'psalmist'. This chapter is an examination of the meditative, devotional aspects of his painting.

The pictures due for consideration are not all watercolours. The watercolours, grouped together, confirmed and emphasized Colman's poetic vision of Christ, and helped to direct attention to the psalm-like qualities of a number of the artist's oil paintings. Like the Psalms of David, Colman's picture-poems are expressed in metaphors, and one is directed to the symbols by the obvious focus on selected objects or features of the landscape which demand the viewer's attention by their central position or their unusual scale. One of the watercolours examined here is actually inscribed as being an illustration of a Psalm. Other paintings include details which remind the viewer of Psalm-like poetry elsewhere in the Bible. Besides this, in several of the paintings, there is an almost exclusive focus on a single visual image, so that one is reminded powerfully of the similar emphasis shown in the emblems in collections published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The strong suggestion in several of Coman's paintings is that these are topoi, emblems, although in most cases he does not supply posterity with the verbal clarification usually given to readers, by Francis Quarles, for example. What is becoming clearer, as more of Colman's pictures come to light, is that he was in the habit of using motifs familiar to the Romantic landscapist - rugged or picturesque scenery, and temples and stylized figures borrowed from the classical mentors of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century artist - and applying Christian meaning to the various chosen conventional features, just as if they were the more openly exhibited symbolic objects reproduced in seventeenth-century emblem anthologies.

Although an interest in emblems was not particularly unusual in Colman's day, the attention he paid to the emblem was novel, especially since the idioms of his pictures were so often otherwise those of his contemporaries. John Martin, for instance, might expect viewers to associate the landscape phenomena in his paintings with a 'message', but this association was quite clearly secondary to the 'story line' of the pictures. Colman insists on the viewer's attention to a particular tree or a rock or a static figure, and one is forced to look for meaning in that symbol. The search for meaning usually shows Colman paying homage to God and to the Son of God, and, in doing so through his emblems, linking a word-and-picture habit familiar to old-fashioned Dissenters with the poetic vocabulary of his own times. One of his oil paintings and one of his watercolours will be used here as starting-points for the study of two biblical metaphors of Christ which must have been favourite images with Colman: the rock and the fountain.

Most of this chapter will be taken up by the analysis of pictures dating from the years of Colman's maturity as an artist.

Interestingly, however, one of his earlier paintings, The Death of Amelia, (Pl. 3) may be read as a Psalm, although not a Christ-centred psalm.

Already mentioned in Chapter One for its similarity to the version of the same subject by Richard Wilson (Pl. 4), The Death of Amelia illustrates the story (as told by James Thomson in 'Summer') of two young lovers, Celadon and Amelia. During a thunderstorm Celadon tried to comfort the frightened Amelia.

> 'Fear not,' he said,
> 'Sweet innocence! thou stranger to offence
> And inward storm! he, who yon skies involves
> In frowns of darkness, ever smiles on thee
> With kind regard. O'er thee the secret shaft
> That wastes at midnight, or the undreaded hour
> Of noon, flies harmless; and that very voice,
> Which thunders terror through the guilty heart,
> With tongues of seraphs whispers peace to thine.'[1]

That very moment, according to the poet, poor Amelia was struck by lightning and Celadon left alone to mourn her. The story was probably suggested to Thomson by a real-life incident which was well-known in his day. However, James Sambrook points out, in notes on the poem, that 'Thomson handles the story for a devotional end, in the manner of the Book of Job, to show God's power and man's incomprehension of God's purposes . . . The unconscious irony of Celadon's confident claim (1204-

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[1] James Thomson, 'Summer', l. 1204, from The Seasons, in The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence, edited by James Sambrook (Oxford, 1972).

14) is heightened by its echo (1208-10) of Ps. 91.5'.[2] The lines from the Psalm read as follows: 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day'.

Colman's painting follows closely the formulae set out in Wilson's Celadon and Amelia. If possible, the Romantic gestures of Nature are exaggerated still further. For instance, Colman has added an English-looking bridge with Gothic arches, across which rides a man in red, on the back of a galloping white horse. The popularity of the theme, however, and the clichés to be see at once in the imagery, need not exclude the likelihood of Colman's having been aware of the biblical allusions in the poem. So there is the possibility that as early as 1804 (which is the date inscribed on the picture) Colman was interested in the 'Mysterious Heaven' which fascinated Thomson in 1727.

One of the most striking pictures by Samuel Colman is an oil painting which I shall refer to (in the absence of any other title) as The Rock of Salvation (Pl. 110).[3] This is signed and dated 1837 and appears to testify to an interest in the Psalms on Colman's part, late in his career.

The painting is dominated by a tall rocky islet, surmounted by a crucified figure. The little island is cloaked in a dark cloud, but the sea which surrounds it is lit gently at the left by moonlight and brightened on the right by the red and gold of a setting sun. Above the water, the distant islands, and the hills which rest on a rather ambiguous horizon, the new moon and bright stars appear in a patch of blue sky. There is no sign of human occupation of this scene, apart from the isolated cross, raised up on the rock.

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[2] See note 1. Sambrook's notes on 'Summer', lines 1171-1222, appear on pp. 223 and 224 of the book.

[3] This picture was with the art dealer, James Mackinnon, London, as of July 1984. It measures 25 x 30 inches.

There is no available written information about the Bible texts which motivated Colman to paint the islet, or about such texts as he intended viewers to apply to the picture. Experience of looking at other biblical paintings by Colman teaches one to expect more than one Bible reference, perhaps a number of them.

The prominence given to the new moon and to the sunset suggest immediately an illustration of the verses in the last chapter of the Book of Isaiah which declare God's promise of the earth made new: 'And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord' (Isaiah 66.23). The new moon rises on one side of the cross in Colman's picture, while on the other side of the island appears the setting sun, signal of the beginning of the sabbath. This assumes that Colman would have known that sundown ushers in the beginning of any new day, including any sabbath, according to biblical reckoning. 'From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath', God instructed Moses (Leviticus 23.32).

This worship, one might suppose, would take the form of the kind of praise illustrated by Psalm 95, verse 1: 'O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation'. The motif of the rock as a symbol of salvation appears again and again in the Psalms, as concordances prove. Psalm 18 is another example: 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my

God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower' (verse 2).

There is also the very strong presence, in Colman's painting, of the imagery called up by Psalm 97: 'The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne' (verses 1-2, to be compared with Psalm 18.11, where David describes God's 'secret place', his 'pavilion', as made of darkness and the 'thick clouds of the skies'). Verse 5 of Psalm 97 tells us that 'the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord'. And verse 7 threatens, 'Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods'. The last verse (verse 12) returns to the mood of thanksgiving: 'Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous: and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness'.

Matthew Henry's commentary on Psalm 97 helps to explain how Samuel Colman and his contemporaries would have been instructed to interpret these passages of scripture. Verse 1, he tells his readers, 'speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called the isles of the Gentiles, Gen. x.5'. The hills which 'melted like wax', according to verse 5, refer here to the enemies of God's people, finally overcome on his Day of Judgement. In Colman's picture the hills on the left do not look absolutely solid. In verse 12, according to Matthew Henry, the 'remembrance of his holiness' refers to Christ's new covenant of grace. The crucified figure in The Rock of Salvation can only be taken as a memorial to this holy covenant. The dark cloud in which the island is wrapped serves the dual function of the 'clouds of darkness' in which God conceals his judgement throne (as in verse 2 of Psalm 97) and the darkness of sorrow which descended when Christ died on the Cross (Matthew 27.45).

Other psalms celebrate the power and creativity of God, and his everlasting renewal of the earth. Psalm 104 is of this type, and a number of its verses seem to apply to the scene painted by Colman. This is a meditation on a God who 'layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind' (verse 3) and who 'appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down' (verse 19).

These lines are echoed in the second stanza of Sir Robert Grant's famous hymn, 'O Worship the King/All-glorious above':[4]

> O tell of His might,
>   O sing of His grace,
> Whose robe is the light,
>   Whose canopy space;
> His chariots of wrath
>   The deep thunder-clouds form;
> And dark is His path
>   On the wings of the storm.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) had expressed similar awe and delight in God's creation in his hymn, 'I sing the almighty power of God'. The second stanza of this poem reads:

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[4] Grant's dates are 1779-1838. He was therefore a contemporary of Colman, although there is no evidence that Colman knew the hymn. It was not included in Josiah Conder's Congregational Hymn-book (London, 1836).

I sing the wisdom that ordained
The sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at his command,
And all the stars obey.

Watts notes in stanza four that:

There's not a plant or flower below
But makes thy glories known;
And clouds arise and tempests blow
By order from thy throne.

Both these authors were at pains to point out the application of their celebrations to a living God-in-Christ. Watts ended his hymn, 'Why should I, then, forget the Lord,/ Whose love is ever nigh?'; and Grant's fifth stanza is about 'Thy mercies how tender,/ How firm to the end,/ Our maker, defender, Redeemer and friend!'. Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet who has already been mentioned in Chapter Three, was more explicit. In a poem called 'Creation and Redemption' he first marvels at the 'thought-o'erwhelming scene' of creation, and then goes on to tell his readers that 'His might is still the same,/ And those who through the name/ Of the incarnate Saviour are set free/ From the dread yoke of sin' are supplied with strength, and 'In his atoning love/ Creative power they prove/ And bow in spirit to THE CRUCIFIED'.[5]

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778), whose celebrated hymn, 'Rock of Ages', Colman can hardly have failed to read or hear or sing, also made a definite connection between the crucified Christ and the Rock of Salvation, although, as I shall show a little later, Toplady's was a rock of multifaceted meaning, symbolic of several very different characteristics of Jesus Christ. Stanza 3 begins, 'In my hand no price I bring;/ Simply to Thy Cross I cling'; and with this image of supplication for grace, the poet associates the cry of the sinner to God the judge: 'When I soar through tracts unknown,/ See thee on Thy Judgement-throne;/ Rock of Ages, cleft for me,/ Let me hide myself in Thee!'.[6]

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[5] Bernard Barton, Devotional Verses (London, 1826), pp. 1, 2.

These references to poetry written by Colman's contemporaries, or by the perennial Isaac Watts, make it clear that it would have been easy for Colman to justify combining the cluster of images provided by the Psalms which praise the God of Creation (and of care for King David and his people) with the symbol of the Cross, a reminder of the Messianic application of the Psalms. The Rock of Salvation is a song of praise by Colman, a hymn to the creator-redeemer. In the tall rock which enthrones the crucifix the painter presents an emblem of the 'almighty power' of Christ, which endures beyond his personal sacrifice for humanity and gives, not only the promise of final judgement, but of everlasting life.

Visually, this painting is mysteriously isolated, not only in Colman's own oeuvre, but in English art. Although there are examples, by Martin and Danby, of lonely seascapes and of smoke-billowing volcanoes vaguely suggestive of Colman's cloud-enclosed 'pavilion', and although Danby painted mysterious sunsets which Colman may have had opportunities to see, there is no parallel in the work of either Martin or Danby for this composition. It may be that Colman's inspiration was a picture of Vesuvius erupting, or the sight of a squall over some coastal islet, such as St Michael's Mount, which he is known to have sketched.[7] The impetus to develop his own topos might have come from the traditional emblem-book representation of the rock as a symbol of steadfastness, isolated on a stormy sea. Geoffrey Whitney, in 1586, Henry Peacham, in 1612, and George Wither, in 1635, all included rock emblems in their published collections. However, the imaginative transformation of such a model appears to have been Colman's own.

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[6] These lines are given here as they appear in Conder's Congregational Hymn-book.

If he did have a Romantic pattern for The Rock of Salvation, Colman may have found it in one of the mystical paintings of wayside or mountain crosses by the German Romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). The presence of the crucifix in Colman's picture does suggest a knowledge of European wayside crosses, or of pictures of them; but whether this familiarity would have come to the artist through books and exhibitions, or through travel on the European continent is altogether unknown. Perhaps it is not necessary for a link to exist, other than the commonality of the theme. Nevertheless it is interesting to see just how closely Colman's painting approaches the compositions produced by Friedrich twenty or thirty years earlier.

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[7] See Catalogue for details. The Creation of Light by George Richmond (reproduced in Rosenblum, p. 54) combines a central vertical cloud with the new moon at the left and a blazing sun on the horizon at the right. This was painted in 1826, but there is no evidence that Colman would have known it. In any case, the picture is dominated, not by an island and a cross, but by the monumental figure of God the Creator.

Friedrich's Das Kreuz an der Ostsee (1815, Pl. 111) is one of several similar paintings of a mariner's cross on a rock.[8] As in Colman's painting, the rock is set against a background of sea and of a luminous sky. The anchor beneath the cross implies faith in Christ, simple belief in a strong Saviour. In the impressive painting known as Das Kreuz im Gebirge ('The Cross in the Mountains'), which was painted between 1807 and 1808, Friedrich used a similarly shaped rock, rising high into the picture space (Pl. 112). Here there is a crucifix, not simply a wooden cross, and the image of Christ is surrounded by fir trees, which are themselves symbols of firm, unshakable, ever-alive Christians. Again, the sky behind the rock is bright, this time with the sun's rays, as if to suggest the words of Psalm 27: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation' (verse 1); 'In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock' (verse 5). Friedrich himself explained his preoccupation with death and with the Cross of Christ in a poem which in essence says that in order to have eternal life, one must offer oneself to death over and over again - the 'I die daily' of Paul, in 1 Corinthians, 15.31.[9] Paul's words in Galatians 6.14 make the same point: 'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world'. Samuel Colman, reading these words, might have been reminded that Isaac Watts wrote a hymn based on the text. This is the famous hymn which begins, 'When I survey the wondrous Cross,/ On which the Prince of glory died'. A stanza not usually sung nowadays reads:

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[8] Das Kreuz an der Ostsee is in the Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin. Very close to it in composition is the Cross at Rügen, which is in the Georg Schäfer Collection, Schweinfurt.

[9] 'The Cross in the Mountains' (also known as the Tetschener Altar) is in the Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Friedrich's poem is quoted by William Vaughan in German Romantic Painting (New Haven and London, 1980), p. 76.

> His dying crimson like a robe,
>   Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
> Then am I dead to all the globe,
>   And all the globe is dead to me.[10]

Then follows the final, more familiar verse:

> Were the whole realm of nature mine,
>   That were a present far too small;
> Love so amazing, so divine,
>   Demands my soul, my life, my all.

These very passionate lines bring to mind Blake's Jerusalem, Plate 76, in which Albion worships Christ, and stretches his arms out in imitation of his saviour, as if also 'dead to all the globe'.[11] Light spreads over and around Jesus, on the tree, not quite like the crimson robe pictured by Watts, but certainly not far from it in feeling. Since Blake was fully acquainted with Watts's poetry, to the extent of shaping some of his own shorter poems on Watts's, it does not come as a surprise to see a connection between a Blake picture and a Watts poem.[12] Fascinatingly, Samuel Colman's Rock of Salvation exhibits a high-towering, tree-like islet, which spreads out at the base, as if to throw down roots more suited to its grand proportions than to the size of the little bushes which perch on its crags. Blake's tree, for its part, rises as a dark, thick shape, more like an island or a tower than a tree.

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[10] This verse is printed in Congregational Praise, the official Congregational hymn-book issued in 1951.

[11] The plate (from Copy F of Jerusalem) is reproduced (Pl. 3) in Paley, The Continuing City, and Dr Paley discusses it on pages 113-117.

This comparison of works by Colman and Blake suggests, in a rather indirect way, a possible source for the inclusion of the sun and moon in Colman's painting.

In the 1820's Samuel Palmer made a number of sketches and paintings which echo Blake's 1821 wood-engravings for Dr Robert Thornton's edition of Virgil's 'Pastorals', and also show his interest in the visual (though not the symbolic) arrangement of Blake's illustrations of the Book of Job. Notably, Palmer adopted Blake's crescent moons; and in a drawing in his Ivimy Sketchbook (1824) he produced a study which closely resembles the landscape in Plate I of Blake's Book of Job engravings (published in 1826, but commissioned by John Linnell in 1823, and based on earlier watercolours also made for Linnell).[13] Palmer's sketch shows a central tree, as in Blake's design ('Thus did Job continually'), and, again as in Blake's engraving, the Palmer sketch includes a sun above a hilly horizon at the viewer's left, and a crescent moon, also above a hill, at the right. Robert Rosenblum comments on the drawing, which he sees as 'a shepherd leading his flock in some dreamlike, pastoral Arcadia':

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[12] See Vivian de Sola Pinto, 'William Blake, Isaac Watts, and Mrs Barbauld', in The Divine Vision: Studies in the Poetry and Art of William Blake, edited by V. De Sola Pinto (London, 1957), pp. 66-87. See also Zachary Leader, Reading Blake's Songs (London, 1981), p. 17.

[13] For reproductions of both the Blake engraving and a number of Palmer's landscapes, see Leslie Parris, Landscape in Britain c. 1750-1850 (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1973), pp. 119-123. The Palmer sketch under discussion (Study for Shepherd and Flock) is reproduced in Rosenblum, p. 57. The quotation from Rosenblum is taken from this page and from the previous one.

> Yet it is clear that this is not to be understood as simply a genre scene of rural life. For one thing, the symmetrical ordering of the composition, vertically bisected by a tree, suggests, as in Friedrich's work, a heraldic symbol, which is further underscored by the presence of the sun and the moon on each side of the tree, an echo perhaps of the simultaneous appearance of these two heavenly bodies in traditional Crucifixion iconography.

Palmer's sketch shows his shepherd on the hill at the left, standing against the disc of the sun, as if surrounded by a nimbus. Clearly the figure has nothing to do with Blake's Job, but is Christ the Good Shepherd. Though the shepherd-Jesus is given an English setting which may, as Rosenblum believes, make 'the Christian conviction of this work all the more persuasive', the effect is also strongly emblematic. While acknowledging Palmer's starting-point to have been Blake's engraving, the enormous, stylized sun and moon, and the central tree on its mound in the foreground beg the viewer to search for the real meaning of this sketch in the models available to both Blake and Palmer - the medieval and Renaissance manuscripts and paintings known at the time in collections or through engravings. Palmer was fond of Flemish painting and must have seen examples of Flemish and perhaps also German Crucifixion scenes which showed the sun and the moon, on either side of the Cross, as indications of the continual mourning of Christ, by all creation, by day and by night. The use of these symbols was widespread. Raphael included them in the early 'Mond Crucifixion' (1502-3, National Gallery, London). There is therefore every reason to suppose that such traditional motifs would have been as accessible to Samuel Colman as to Samuel Palmer.

It may also be useful to keep in mind that traditional Crucifixion paintings very often included prominent rocks. There are many examples in Flemish and German paintings of the sixteenth century, and Colman may have been influenced by seeing such pictures, or reproductions of them. After all, he demonstrated an awareness of Bruegel's landscapes in St John Preaching. It almost goes without saying that Friedrich would have had similar - or better - opportunities to use these early models.[14] Nevertheless, Friedrich's mystical crosses are obviously based on closely observed landscape. And Colman's Rock of Salvation shows that his concept of the subject included a vision of the Cross in a poetic landscape in which the elements, however symbolic, are naturalistic in appearance and in which the composition does not follow any one precedent.

One is left feeling impressed that Samuel Colman, like Friedrich, and like another fellow Protestant, David Wilkie, at about the same time, was quite able to observe and assimilate traditional Christian imagery found in impressive Renaissance models - Roman Catholic models - and to employ that imagery to his own purposes, which were definitely Protestant purposes.

I have interpreted Colman's painting as an emblem of the 'mighty power' of God. This power, this sovereignty, is central to

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[14] For one example (selected at random) of a crucified Christ whose cross is shown just in front of a prominent rock, see Christ on the Cross between King David and John the Baptist by Hans Leonhard Schäufelein (1508, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg). Schäufelein was a pupil of Dürer.

Calvinist teaching and therefore Colman's expression of that power is not surprising; he was a member of a denomination which inherited its basic tenets from Calvinist forbears. However, the painting is not a memorial to a single event in history in which God intervened supernaturally, as at Belshazzar's Feast, or at the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea. Instead it is, it seems, a hymn of praise to the God of Creation and of Redemption, with God's two marvellously different characteristics of life-giving strength and of self-sacrificing humility symbolized in the rock and the crucifix. The viewer is asked to focus on the rock as an object of contemplation. In this sense the picture is not very far removed from a devotional painting by a Roman Catholic artist or by an artist with High Anglican interests. In a number of his other paintings Colman makes use of his knowledge of works of art which have classical themes or Roman Catholic content in order to make specifically anti-Catholic pronouncements by 'quoting' these well-known pictures, using them as symbols. This practice is at its most obvious in The Destruction of the Temple and in The Edge of Doom.[15] Colman also adapts important compositional conventions of medieval and Renaissance Church art when structuring pictures which are clearly either anti-Catholic or pro Dissent. I shall have more to say of this later, in Chapter Nine. What is important here is that The Rock of Salvation, and one or two of the other paintings which will be discussed in this chapter, are openly devotional pictures. Though Colman undoubtedly approached his subject matter as a Protestant, and as a Dissenter, his theological viewpoint cannot be seen to be different from that of a Catholic or Anglican. The paintings fit in to a tradition of Christian mysticism and confirm the notion of Colman's uniqueness as an artist who was also an Independent. On the other hand, if one looks at the painter as a poet and Psalmist, he is immediately recognizable as a spiritual descendant of Isaac Watts, and even of Milton, and therefore quite worthy of his place in 'orthodox Dissent'.

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[15] See Chapter Six, and also Chapter Nine.

Isaac Watts was a teenager when the Glorious Revolution put King Billy on the throne in 1688 and gave Britain a Constitutional Monarchy. A good Whig, Watts often wrote explicitly anti-Papist songs. One of them includes the line, 'No vain pretence to royal birth/ Shall fix a tyrant on the throne'.[16] Watts was a scholar, with a very wide-ranging education received at a Dissenting Academy. He was also an Independent minister for some years. His writings demonstrate a fascinating tension between eighteenth-century rationalism and common sense on the one hand, and the 'inward witness' or inner light, of which he wrote in a notable sermon.[17] From the seventeenth century Watts inherited an emotional and even mystical approach to the worship of God. His was a 'testimony known by being felt and practiced, not by mere reasoning', as he said himself.[18] Bernard Manning wrote of Watts that he 'sees the Cross, as Milton had seen it, planted on a globe hung in space, surrounded by the vast distances of the universe'.[19] Watts's poetry certainly gives the impression that he had a powerfully visual idea of Christ - but not a naturalistic vision and certainly not a sentimental vision; his pictures of sorrow and celebration are obviously based on familiar symbolism. 'His dying crimson like a robe/ Spreads o'er His body on the tree' appears to be an intimate vision of the Saviour, but is really very stylized. It suggests the red light of the setting sun (the 'sun of righteousness' as Jesus is described in Malachi 4.2) and also draws attention to the cross as a tree, which it was not, except in metaphorical terms. Again, in a hymn for the celebration of the Lord's Supper (a sacrament which was very important to him) Watts wrote, 'Faith eats the Bread of Life,/ And drinks the living Wine;/ It looks beyond this scene of strife,/ Unites us to the Vine' - not a very good poem, but another example of its author's habitual use of traditional Christian symbols.

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[16] See Bernard Manning, The Hymns of Wesley and Watts: Five Informal Papers (London, 1942), p. 98.

[17] 'The Inward Witness of Christianity', in The Works of Isaac Watts (London, 1753), I, 1.

[18] See Note 17. The quotation is given in Arthur Paul Davis, Isaac Watts: His Life and Works (London, 1943), p. 136.

The question of how Watts, with his Calvinist background, his Puritan heritage, became attuned to writing in a metaphysical style (that is, metaphysical in the sense of its being visionary and symbolic) is addressed by Donald Davie. He believes that Watts, and many other educated English Dissenters, were linked with French 'classical' culture because - or at least to a large extent because - Huguenot refugees brought libraries with them and shared them with their hosts in seventeenth-century England. The connection was not limited to French Protestant literature, but included Roman Catholic writing. Davie points out that 'after all the Roman Church produces its own puritans, and

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[19] Manning, p. 83.

Racine's Athalie, so far as it is Jansenist, is itself puritan art'.[20] He adds that 'Watts drew upon the Counter Reformation more generally, notably upon the Latin poems of "the Christian Horace", the Polish Jesuit, Matthew Casimire Sarbiewski (1595-1640). In short, English Dissent does not offer an insular alternative to European culture, a way of "keeping out", but rather a way of "going in" on special, and specially rewarding terms'.

Samuel Colman was born thirty-two years after the death of Isaac Watts. Therefore one ought to hesitate before concluding that the apparent similarities between what Watts wrote and Colman painted were due to a shared tradition of 'going in' to European literature and art. If one knew Colman to have been a well-travelled man, or a particularly scholarly man, one might be tempted to think that his devotional paintings were the result of contact with German Protestant theology of the kind which influenced Friedrich. If one knew him to have had commissions from patrons interested in such mystical landscapes as The Rock of Salvation, then the patron's taste might be assumed to have been the influencing factor. But there is no such knowledge available, and so it is reasonable to continue to see in Colman a man who received his ideas from the Bible as it was presented to him in Independency. It is vital to keep in mind that this Independency encompassed a strong spiritual tradition, some of which undoubtedly survived the 'charge of enthusiasm' of which Watts was afraid.[21] In particular, the hymns of Isaac Watts, and of others who inherited Watts's visionary mode, are certain, when Colman encountered them, to have given the artist 'permission' to explore ways of translating the words into mystical pictures. The process of exploration meant giving new vitality to the emblematic language because of course Colman was not living in Isaac Watts's eighteenth-century Hanoverian England, but in the entirely different political and artistic climate of Britain at the beginning of the Victorian era.

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[20] Davie, p. 27. The reference to Sarbiewski appears on p. 28.

[21] See Watts's 'Inward Witness' as quoted in Davis, p. 137.

In Friedrich's Morgen im Riesengebirge (Pl. 113), which he painted about 1811, the crucifix, raised up on the rocks above the morning mists, suggests an extension of the meaning of the 'rock of salvation'.[22] 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help', says the Psalmist, adding 'My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth' (Psalm 121.1,2). Psalm 48, verse 1, describes the Lord as 'greatly to be praised . . . in the mountain of his holiness'. The same imagery appears in Isaiah 2.2: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills'. Mountains, in texts like these, are metaphors of Mount Zion, real and figurative - supporting the City of David or 'in the last days' the New Jerusalem. But Friedrich, with his Romantic adoration of nature, appears to have wanted to stress the holiness of the mountains and to leave unstated the appearance of the Holy City. This particular painting, with its tiny figures climbing up to the rugged base of a cross, can be seen to represent Life's Pilgrimage, in which a woman (the church of Christ or perhaps a personification of faith?) leads a man (Christian?) to

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22 The painting is in the Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

Christ, and liberation from sin. All around the cross, the lower hills imply wilderness and uncertainty, out of which the cross, on its rugged base, rises in triumphant clarity. About 1810, Friedrich had painted another very arresting pilgrimage landscape, Mountain Landscape with Rainbow (Folkwang Museum, Essen). There is no cross in this picture, but a foreground figure with a staff looks into the distance where a bright rainbow hangs in the clouds above a grand, pyramidal mountain. The rainbow, says Robert Rosenblum, 'spans the width of the image in an emblematic geometry that locates the whole in a symbolic realm'.[23] In a poem called 'Signs and Tokens', Bernard Barton wrote what could be considered a 'caption' for just such scenes as Friedrich's:[24]

Christian Pilgrim, seeking still,
  Zion's high and holy hill,
May the Lord to thee impart
  Single eye and steadfast heart. (Verse 1)

Keep thou Zion-ward thy face,
  Ask in faith the aid of grace,
Use the strength which grace shall give,
  Die to self - in Christ to live. (Verse 6)

Samuel Colman's Delivery of Israel (Pl. 36) is also, at one level, a pilgrimage picture. God's promise to the Israelites was, as he told Moses, 'to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage' (Exodus 6.4). Applying the story to the Christian life, William Williams (1717-91) wrote in his famous hymn, 'Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,/Pilgrim through this barren land', adding, 'Let the fiery, cloudy pillar/ Lead me all my journey through'. At the far side of the Red Sea, in Colman's painting, the pilgrims of Israel are standing with Moses on the dry land, the safe place, the 'high tower' of Psalm 18, or the rock described in Psalm 27, verse 5. The 'emblematic geometry' used by Colman fixes the rock or mountain just below the centre of a brilliantly lit circle which marks the end of the tunnel formed by the collapsing walls of water in which the enemies of God's people are doomed to destruction. The focus of the painting is the mountain, and the symbol of heavenly grace which is not a rainbow here, but the 'pillar of fire and of the cloud' (Exodus 14.24) which signals God's presence and promise of safety. Of course the scene is a metaphor of the final destruction of sin at the end of the world, but what is of importance here is that it was also recognized by Colman as an occasion of rejoicing, of psalm-singing.

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[23] Rosenblum, p. 45.

[24] The Reliquary, pp. 106, 107.

In the Book of Psalms, various songs refer specifically to the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Israel's Egyptian enemies. Psalm 77 is a song of praise to God, whose 'way is in the sea' and whose 'path [is] in the great waters' (verse 19). It ends, 'Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron' (verse 20). Psalm 78, verses 13 and 14, gives a fairly prosaic account of the Exodus, and there are other short descriptions of the events in the story in Psalms 105 and 106. But the really splendid song about the delivery of the Israelites is Moses' song in Exodus, Chapter 15.

'Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation'. This is how the song begins. If one looks closely (Pl. 41), one can see, behind Moses, and between him and the tents pitched on a level stretch of land beyond the rock, a great crowd of his fellow Israelites, waving banners, obviously joining in the psalm. Some of the people appear to be lifting their arms high, and playing on tambourines, in illustration of verses 20 and 21 of the same chapter: 'And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea'.

An even more impressive testimony to Colman's interest in this particular passage of scripture is the strange painting known as The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host (Pl. 42). One might say that in this painting Colman had 'zoomed in' on Pharaoh, standing on his chariot, whereas in The Delivery of Israel he is a distant, though noticeable figure, directly below the rock on which Moses stands. Here he is silhouetted against the light, yellow-gold of the rock face, and again positioned almost immediately below Moses. The picture is divided vertically by the pillar of cloud and fire, so that an enormous beam of gold and red separates the safe mountainside from the dark and dangerous wave which crashes over the Egyptian army. Colman seems to be remembering the text which tells us that 'in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians' (Exodus 14.24). Yet there is no doubt that the painting is also one of Colman's 'psalms'. To the left of

Pharaoh, and above him, on a ledge of rock, a woman dances and plays on a 'timbrel' held high above her head. There is a smaller female figure in much the same pose, on a pathway not far below Moses. Moses himself, in this scene, raises his staff as if in triumph as well as in the gesture of destruction described in Exodus 14.26; and one can almost hear the people around him singing Handel's chorus, from Israel in Egypt, 'The horse and his rider, the horse and his rider, hath he thrown into the sea'.[25] Among the fallen warriors, in both these paintings, there are wild-eyed horses, rearing or galloping in frenzied attempts to 'flee from the face of Israel' (Exodus 14.25).

If he read Colman's advertisement in 1830, and went to see the exhibition of 'The Israelites' Passage through the Red Sea', 'Philographicus' would not have thought much of Colman's horses. Anguished though they are, these animals have the look about them of fairground horses on a roundabout, or of nursery rocking-horses. There is also the strong suggestion, in some of them, that the artist was in the habit of looking at sixteenth-century battle-scenes. Altdorfer's Battle of Alexander (1529, Alte Pinakothek, Munich) is frequently suggested as a possible source of some of John Martin's crowd scenes, particularly in Joshua. Colman may have known this too - and other Mannerist battle-pieces - for although there is no doubt that John Martin's own paintings influenced him, Colman's figures, and these horses in particular, have a toy-like naivety which may have been transmitted directly from sixteenth-century pictures. The horses have a certain charm nowadays - their lack of reality contributing to the surprise value of the whole scene. No doubt, however, 'Philographicus' would have agreed with the Revd Harry Farr Yeatman, whose comments on Colman's portrait of his mare and hounds have been quoted in Chapter One, that Colman could not have had 'the living object before him' and was therefore not painting 'correctly'.

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[25] It was mentioned in Chapter Three that selections from Israel in Egypt were performed in Bristol in May 1836. Very probably such a well-known work was familiar to Colman long before then.

Towards the beginning of this chapter I noted that the Revd Augustus Toplady's hymn, 'Rock of Ages', applies the metaphor of the rock to more than one characteristic of God and of God's Son. There is the implication, in the title of the song and in the last verse, with its reference to the Judgement throne, that Toplady was thinking of the timelessness of God, the God who was there at Creation, the God who made the mountains and who would one day judge humanity from a throne, raised high, like a rock. This is the strong, unchanging, triumphant God represented in Friedrich's Das Kreuz an der Ostsee and in Das Kreuz im Gebirge, and who is also symbolized in Samuel Colman's Rock of Salvation, and in the scene of triumph, high on the rock, in his Delivery of Israel. However, in the second phrase of his hymn, Toplady introduces another aspect of God. 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,/ Let me hide myself in Thee', he pleads. He asks for the protection of a kind God who will shelter him from the consequences of sin.

There is something of the feeling of the hymn in Psalm 27, verse 5: 'For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me'. And Psalm 91.4 promises: 'He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust'. However, Revd Toplady was almost certainly thinking of the passage in Exodus, Chapter 33 in which Moses, who had asked God to show him his 'glory' was told: 'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live' (verse 20). Moses was granted a glimpse of God from behind, along with the Father's protection: 'And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen' (verses 22 and 23).

Legend has it that the Revd Toplady found himself caught in a thunderstorm while walking in Burrington Combe, in Somerset. He took shelter in a convenient cleft in the rocks nearby. Finding a playing card lying on the ground at his feet, he wrote on the card the words of his hymn, as they were inspired by the situation. One wonders if he had at the back of his mind, not only the Exodus 33 image of the Lord as a rock, but the words of the first two verses of yet another hymn by Isaac Watts:

O God, our help in ages past,
  Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
  And our eternal home!

Under the shadow of Thy throne,
  Still may we dwell secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
  And our defence is sure.

In pictorial terms, the closest equivalent I have found to the 'Rock of Salvation' as a 'clift' or sheltering place, is a powerful landscape by Friedrich, called Höhle mit Grabmal (Grab des Arminius, Felsental).[26] In this unusual scene, the grave is sheltered by a huge rock, 'cleft' to show a giant fissure, reaching from the grassy hollow in which the burial place has been made, to the top of the rock as it disappears out of the picture. Although there is absolutely no evidence to support the idea of any link between Friedrich and Watts, the picture with its obviously symbolic rocks, could well be read as just such an optimistic paraphrase of Psalm 90 as Watts's 'O God, our help in ages past'. The pine trees in the painting recall the 'everlasting' God addressed by Watts in verse 3 of his hymn. Verses 4, 5 and 6 appear to point to the writer's hope in the resurrection - something also hinted at strongly in Friedrich's painting of a tomb, which, like Christ's is not now sealed by a stone. Here are the stanzas by Watts which present the same general hopefulness:

A thousand ages in Thy sight,
  Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
  Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
  Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
  Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
  Our hope for years to come,

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[26] This was painted in 1807 and is in the Kunsthalle, Bremen. See Pl. 114.

Be Thou our guard while life shall last,
And our eternal home.

So far, no painting by Samuel Colman has been discovered which puts substantial emphasis on the Rock as a shelter, or 'clift'. It is true that in The Rock of Salvation, the rocky island appears to have a cave or inlet on the right side; but this is not stressed by the painter. However, there is one tantalizing link with the 'Rock of Ages' and its sheltering cleft. This is a drawing by Colman, on paper which is watermarked '1818' and inscribed 'Burrington Coombe, nr Langford' (Pl. 10). The drawing is a careful working sketch of a placid scene which includes boys paddling in a stream. There are verbal indications of the types of foliage to be included in the final picture - ivy, for example - and notes on the colours. Spurs of rock occupy the top of the picture space, but there is no sense of drama, no hint of the kind of storm which Toplady experienced in the same place. For want of evidence, one can only say that Colman must have visited Burrington Combe and that he was attracted by its picturesque qualities. Any other associations that it may have had for him remain a matter for conjecture.

As I have shown already, 'Rock of Ages' appears to refer to the strong rock of the God who is Creator and Judge. It is also quite clearly the protective rock of a merciful Father. But there is still another very important aspect of this rock to be examined. This is what George P. Landow calls the 'Smitten Rock'.

In analysing a hymn by John Newton ('When Israel by Divine command'), Landow demonstrates how the poet managed to bring together several New Testament events which all seem to be suggested or prefigured by the image of the rock in the Old Testament - as that rock appears in different stories. 'The effect', Landow goes on to say, 'is to emphasize the complexity and richness of the Gospel scheme by demonstrating how many of its strands come together at any one point in time'. In Toplady's 'Rock of Ages', as in Newton's hymn, 'the type of the smitten rock . . . becomes a powerful meditative image, a window into the miraculous world of salvation'.[27]

In the hymn, the lines which read, 'Let the water and the blood,/ From Thy riven side which flowed,/ Be of sin the double cure,/ Cleanse me from its guilt and power', undoubtedly allude to the other meaning of the 'cleft' rock: the 'smitten' rock of Christ's sacrifice, symbolized by the rock which Moses struck in the wilderness, at Horeb (Exodus 17.6), and again, later on, at Kadesh (Numbers 20.8). On both occasions the rock opened to pour forth water for the thirsty Israelites. Psalm 78, verses 15 and 16, recalls this providence. At Kadesh, when Moses was instructed by God to speak to the rock in order to obtain the water, he struck it instead, disregarding God's command. In spite of this faithlessness, God provided the needed water. Toplady may have been thinking of this when he wrote of the guilt he felt. Like the rock, Christ allowed himself to be 'riven', so that his grace could pour out, symbolized by blood, given freely, even for those who betrayed him.

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27 Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art and Thought (Boston, 1980), pp. 73 and 74. Landow gives an elaborate account of the meaning of the 'smitten rock' as it was perceived by the Victorians - referring back to earlier influential uses of the image, in literature and the visual arts.

Again, the closest visual analogue of 'The Smitten Rock' is Caspar David Friedrich's Kreuz im Gebirge (Kruzifix im Tannenwald).[28] A crucifix stands in the centre of the picture, planted, one feels (like the bare bushes around it) in the gash in a great rock. Below the cross, and out of the rock, flows a stream of water. If he had been a Catholic living a few centuries previously, Friedrich would probably have painted a crucified Christ from whose body there spurted streams of blood, as if from a fountain. These might have been caught in a chalice. Instead, the same symbolism - or something not very different from it - is absorbed by the real-looking rock and the little waterfall, which forms a cup-like pool in the foreground of the painting.

There is no equivalent in the known work of Samuel Colman of this very focused and mystical image of the 'Smitten Rock'. As in the case of the 'Sheltering Rock' it may be reasonable to look for signs of 'the water and the blood' in Colman's Rock of Salvation. But, if such signs are intended, they are not given very forcefully by the painter. The rocky island looks damp, rather than like the 'crystal Fountain,/ Whence the healing streams do flow' - which is how William Williams described the symbolic rock in Horeb.[29]

Interestingly, Friedrich's Das Kreuz im Gebirge - the Tetschener Altar of 1807-1808 - was imitated by Josef Führich a few years later in a picture of the same title. This shows a pilgrim approaching the rock upon which stands the crucifix and the fir trees.

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[28] This was painted about 1813. The picture is now in the Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf. See Pl. 115.

[29] The quotation is from 'Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah!' which was written in 1774, two years before Toplady's 'Rock of Ages'.

From the rock water cascades in obvious reference to the 'smitten rock' and its Christian significance.[30]

Like Burrington Combe in Somerset, Gordale Scar in Yorkshire offers the viewer a reminder in Nature of all the biblical implications of the Rock: its 'sublime' everlasting strength, its capacity to shelter, its open provision of refreshment. Gordale Scar was a favourite scenic attraction for the Romantics, and many artists attempted to capture its grandeur - among them Turner, William Westall and, most notably, James Ward. For many tourists, the sheer surprise of the great gorge would have been all that mattered; but in Westall's case (since so much of his work involved Bible illustration) and certainly in Ward's (since he was an Irvingite) one can assume that the rocks would have been understood symbolically. It would also be surprising if Turner did not associate the scene with appropriate biblical references. The poet Thomas Gray, who, as an early admirer of the Scar, went to experience its 'horror' in 1769, remarked in a notebook that 'it is safer to shelter yourself close to its bottom, and trust the mercy of that enormous mass'.[31] Sadly, there is no evidence, as yet, that Samuel Colman tackled the same view, or attempted to use another artist's picture of it as the basis of a 'Rock of Ages' allegorical painting.

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[30] See Werner Hofmann et alia, William Turner und die Landschaft seiner Zeit (Munich, 1976). Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 19 May - 18 July 1976.

[31] This quotation from Gray's Notebook is part of an excerpt included in Parris's Landscape in Britain, p.76. The emphases are mine. For reproductions of the Ward and Westall interpretations of Gordale Scar, see Edward J. Nygren, James Ward's Gordale Scar: An Essay in the Sublime (London, Tate Gallery Publications, 1982). Turner's drawing of the same scene is reproduced in Wilton, Turner and the Sublime, p. 124.

This is not to say that we have no example at all of Colman's painting the 'smitten rock'. Between the trees, towards the viewer's right, in The Coming of the Messiah, there is a delightful miniature landscape in which Moses can be seen striking the wilderness rock, while below him, the Israelites collect water from the transparent outflow as it falls down the mountainside and spreads out over bushes and boulders in delicate cascades.

That this little scene is intended to refer to Christ's crucifixion is made perfectly clear by the inclusion in the picture of other well-known symbols of the same event. Further to the centre of the painting, to the right of the doomed city, the 'serpent of brass' can be recognized. This refers to Numbers 21.8: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live'. The pole, with the symbolic serpent on it, is silhouetted against the sky, Moses standing beside it and the people nearby. Below, but still on the hillside, John the Baptist can be seen gesturing towards a simple wooden cross and preaching about its meaning to some Roman soldiers.

In the foreground of the picture Christ himself appears - not only as the Good Shepherd, leading his flock to safety, but separately, as the risen Christ, dressed in his blood-stained robe, and treading down the serpent which represents Satan. Setting aside for the moment the apocalyptic 'theology' of Colman's painting, it is possible to look at it as a visual parallel to two great songs of praise which Colman could hardly have missed. Both appear in Conder's Congregational Hymn-book (1836). More important, however, they were written in the eighteenth century and formed part of the heritage of most nineteenth-century Dissenters.

Both celebrate the Christ who, in his metaphorical guise as the 'smitten rock' provides sinners with 'streams of mercy' or the 'healing streams' of his salvation.

Robert Robinson (1735-1790) was the writer of the hymn, 'Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing'. In the Congregational Hymn-book the text supplied with the title of the poem is I Samuel 7.12, which reads: 'Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying Hitherto hath the Lord helped us'. 'Ebenezer' means 'stone of help', and Samuel and the people of Israel were celebrating a victory over the Philistines. Robinson refers to the text just once in the hymn, when he begins verse 2 with the words, 'Here I raise my Ebenezer'; the rest of the imagery is much more directly related to Christ. But the suggestion of the 'stone of help' is actually very apt in reference to Colman's painting when one considers that the emblem of the 'smitten rock' appears in the picture, and that the destruction of God's enemies is being accomplished by the supernatural casting down of a great rock. However, the hymn is certainly not one which dwells in any way on destruction; it is completely centred on the sinner's salvation through Christ. Here are some of the ways in which, in this emphasis on Christ, and on the individual Christian, it can be matched by details in The Coming of the Messiah - always remembering that the picture is being searched for only one layer of possible meaning:

Come, Thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

As I have already pointed out, the 'fount of blessing' is included in the picture, in its aspect of 'smitten rock' . There is other water in the picture too, however; and it is conceivable that the angel at the left, seated in a wooded glade which overlooks the sunlit side of the pool, or sea, that fills the centre of the painting, is tuning, not merely a millennial harp, but the figurative heart of the poet, responding to the bounty of Christ's grace which may be symbolized by such a pool.

The third verse of the hymn also seems to apply to the painting:

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
  Wandering from the fold of God;
He to rescue me from danger,
  Interposed His precious blood.

On the right of the picture - again as we have seen - the painter has introduced a long line of sheep, which are being rescued from danger. In the mid foreground of the scene stands Jesus, the mark of his spilled blood visible on his robe. The sunlit water behind may be regarded in this case as the 'still waters' of Psalm 23.

The other hymn which I have selected for its resemblance to the 'Psalm level' of Colman's painting is Charles Wesley's famous 'Jesus! Lover of My Soul'.[32]

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[32] Charles Wesley's dates are 1707-88. In Conder's Congregational Hymn-book (1836) this hymn, which appeared as Number 533 (immediately after 'Rock of Ages' and before 'Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing') was entitled 'Jesus, Refuge of My Soul'.

In this poem Wesley (who seems to be recalling Psalm 36) addresses his Saviour in language just as ecstatic as anything Watts might have chosen. He uses the metaphor of the fountain in the last verse of the hymn. 'Thou of life the Fountain art', he writes, 'Freely let me take of Thee'. The emphasis of the poem is on Christ's protective care, and the metaphors Wesley relies on in the first and second verses are those of the weather:

Jesus! lover of my soul,
  Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
  While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
  Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into the haven guide:
  Oh receive my soul at last! (Verse 1)

Verse 2 ends with the line (suggestive of both Psalm 36.7 and of Psalm 91.4): 'Cover my defenceless head/ With the shadow of Thy wing'.

In The Coming of the Messiah the water behind the Messiah, and to his left, is stormy and dark, and a ship appears to be struggling on it, as if on 'the storm of life'. The foreground king, kneeling before his Saviour, removes his crown, as if to admit his human defencelessness and to beg for 'cover' in the 'shadow' of Christ's protective 'wing'. Appropriately (though Colman may not have been thinking of this text) Psalm 91.4 ends with the promise, 'His truth shall be thy shield and buckler'. In the painting the kneeling king has cast down his earthly armour, including his shield - in preparation, one might suppose, for putting on the 'shield and buckler' of Christ's truth.

If Colman required the inspiration of other works of art in order to paint the lyrical passages in The Coming of the Messiah, he might have found such inspiration in Martin's illustrations of Milton's Paradise Lost (1827), in which there are certainly angels and fountains. Then again, as I suggested in Chapter Two, he might have found suitable models in the work of Bristol painters - always assuming that he did not himself influence them. The dream-like combination of rugged mountains and exotic palms is certainly similar to Danby's sketch, Romantic Valley Scene (Pl. 16) And Colman's painting is closer still to Samuel Jackson's watercolour, A Land of Dreams. The tree formations at the left in each composition are similar, besides the general arrangement of the water and the palms and the boats. Jackson's picture includes a fountain, on the far side of the lake. This painting was simply a landscape fantasy as it would appear from the label on the back of the picture, which states that the scene recalls a land where 'Friends meet Friends "long lost" in the glow of the mellow evening light'.[33] But if Colman knew it, it may have prompted him to use its idyllic landscape as a starting-point for his own visionary scene with its more specific message or messages.

As can be seen from the discussion of The Coming of the Messiah, the two biblical symbols of the Rock and the Fountain are impossible to discuss separately when, as one must, one finds that the Rock becomes the Fountain.

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[33] For the full details of the inscription, see Greenacre, p. 156.

Both symbols are present in St John Preaching in the Wilderness, where they assume a slightly different meaning, or a different application of their typological significance. St John, as Colman himself points out in his 'Description of the Picture' (page 5 of the pamphlet), 'stands on a rock, on the left hand: beneath him are interspersed repentant figures waiting for Baptism'. This baptism will take place in a stream which appears to flow from an invisible source in the mountains. The cloudburst in the mountains may even have brought into being this 'fountain', and Colman says (on page 7 of the leaflet) that this cascade is meant to show that what John is doing is 'accompanied with a Divine power'; so it is possible that the intention of the picture is to show - among all the other symbolic treasures - the Smitten Rock, in the light in which it was frequently understood, as a baptismal font.

There is one painting by Colman in which an enormous fountain appears without the slightest hint of any rock. This is the watercolour which I have entitled The Fountain of Life (Pl. 125).[34] The picture is totally dominated by the fountain, and this implies that Colman held the fountain to have independent symbolic identity. The viewer is therefore encouraged to search for Bible texts which present the fountain without any allusion to the rock.

Psalm 36 (already touched on) provides the following promise to those who put their trust in God: 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light' (verses 8 and 9). In the Book of Proverbs two texts use the image of the fountain to stress the blessings of obedience to God: 'The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death' (13.14), and 'The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death' (14.27). The prophet Joel looks forward to a time when 'the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim' (Chapter 3, verse 18). This text would have been understood by Colman as a vision of the future, when God's people, his true church, would be cared for in the new earth. There is a similar prophecy in Isaiah 41.18: 'I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water'.

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[34] As of November, 1984, the picture was with Agnews, London. See the Catalogue for further details.

In Colman's watercolour, a fountain spurts with great energy from a dark brown, scalloped dish. It reaches up to the top of the picture, where the trees which flank the water arch gently over the central cascade. Behind the fountain there are more trees of several species, while a variety of flowers grows beneath, by the pool which fills the foreground. It is a little hard to tell whether the water at the top of the picture is fountain or waterfall. We may be looking at Colman's interpretation of the 'rivers in high places' which merge with the 'fountains in the midst of the valleys' and the 'pool of water' in the wilderness.

There is also the strong likelihood that this unusual painting is a 'meditation' by Colman on these words from St John's vision of the new earth: 'And he that sat upon the throne said . . . I am Alpha and

Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely' (Revelation 21.6). In Revelation 22.1 the Evangelist adds: 'And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb'. These are the texts alluded to in the inscription which appears on the fountain occupying the foreground of the 'Adoration of Holy Lamb' panel in the interior of the Ghent Altarpiece. Colman is making the same reference, but with a Romantic attention to the sublimity of his fountain and to the botanical details of its heavenly surroundings, and with a good Dissenter's avoidance of the obvious collection of 'graven images' which one sees in the Ghent Altarpiece and in so many other Catholic variations on the same theme. If he cared to, Colman could claim that his fountain was a real one which might, just coincidentally, remind one of the words from Revelation. This kind of claim would be in line with contemporary Associationalist thinking. On the other hand, there is every reason to believe - from the evidence of the poetry of Isaac Watts and of John Wesley and their successors in Dissent - that Colman would not have been afraid to acknowledge his painting as an emblem of Christ and of his salvation.

As an emblem, Colman's fountain is in one sense a crucifixion scene. It would have been recognizable as such to Charles Wesley. 'My dying Saviour, and my God,/ Thou Fount for guilt and sin,/ Apply to me Thy precious blood,/ And cleanse, and keep me clean' he wrote in verse two of his hymn, 'For Ever Here My Rest Shall Be'. The base of the fountain is chalice-shaped, so that there is a reminder - just as there is in the Ghent Altarpiece, where a tiny chalice catches the blood of the Lamb standing on the altar - of those traditional paintings in which the blood of the dying Christ flows into a cup supported by an angel. I have mentioned this tradition already in reference to Friedrich. One example which comes to mind is the Crucifixion by the early fifteenth-century Master of Saint Veronica, in which a very tiny chalice is held below the pierced feet of the Saviour. This picture is now in the Kress Collection in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. Colman would have had access to equivalents, at least in the form of engravings.

More directly, of course, the chalice/fountain in this watercolour is a reminder of the communion service, and of the cup which, in the Congregationalist service, simply symbolizes Christ's sacrifical blood. 'Vine of heaven, Thy blood supplies/ This blest cup of sacrifice', wrote Josiah Conder (who was, of course, a contemporary of Colman).[35] One has to remember that while the symbolic bread and wine used in the services Colman attended were very definitely regarded as no more than symbols, this awareness did not prevent the Lord's Supper from being an occasion of deep emotional appeal. Earlier in this chapter I quoted a verse from a hymn by Watts entitled 'Jesus Invites His Saints', in which the poet stressed that, by faith, the worshipper 'drinks the living wine'. The previous stanza makes it clear that 'We take the bread and wine/ As emblems of Thy death'. But then Watts demands fervently, 'Lord, raise our souls above the sign,/ To feast on Thee by faith'. Colman's little picture is an invitation to such a feast.

As a deliberate emblem of Christ and of the wellspring of salvation, The Fountain of Life appears to be unique. However, in Romantic painting, the fountain was a popular motif. An impressive fountain appears in an engraving entitled 'A Garden', as an illustration for Samuel Rogers' 'The Pleasures of Memory' in the 1834 edition of Rogers' Poems. Turner provided the original watercolour from which the engraver worked. The fountain looks typical of those in formal European gardens. Werner Hofmann illustrates a number of examples, one of which is a view by Hubert Robert of a cascade in the gardens of the Villa Conti at Frascati.[36] Hofmann also provides a reproduction of a painting, carried out about 1811, by Franz Ludwig Catel, which shows a view of Rome, including St Peter's.[37] The church stands in the distance, roughly in the centre of the composition. In the foreground there are shade trees which flank an enormous fountain. The water is not playing in a grand spout, so the dome of the church, and the arched shape of sky above the bowl of the fountain act the part of the water - which is perhaps significant.

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[35] These lines begin verse 2 of Conder's hymn, 'Bread of Heaven'.

Another enormous fountain - or the base for one - which was painted in Germany, was The Granite Dish in the Pleasure Garden, by Johann Hummel (c. 1832, Pl. 126). If this has importance for its content, it is probably for its whimsical comment on fashionable society.

I have not found a fountain of importance in any painting by Danby, although he did produce an urn of classical shape and of enormous proportions in The Three Sisters of Phaeton Weeping over the Tomb of their Brother (Pl. 127).[38] John Martin included a very large classical urn in a sepia drawing of trees and ruins (Pl. 128).[39] And the Victoria and Albert Museum owns a watercolour by Martin of Alexander and Diogenes (1827) in which there is a prominent fountain and twin waterfalls - not resembling Colman's fountain scene in the least, however.[40] In fact, the sampling of fountain-paintings and of related subjects by Colman's contemporaries which is given here has been included to show that, while the fountain and the urn obviously fascinated artists of the period, no one else appears to have painted just this kind of fountain; for this picture almost amounts to an icon.

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[36] See William Turner und die Landschaft seiner Zeit, p. 258.

[37] Hofmann, p. 259.

[38] This is now in the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Perhaps the closest parallel to Colman's Fountain of Life is Thomas Cole's strange picture of The Titan's Goblet (Pl. 129).[41] Cole's painting was carried out in 1833, undoubtedly under the influence of fountains, both real and painted, which he had seen not long before in Europe, and of legends associated with fountains. He may have been familiar with the Norse myth of the Yggdrasill, or Tree of Life, of which there are suggestions in the stem and branch-like decorations of the huge goblet. Or, more plausibly, when one considers the style of architecture of the minute buildings by the rim of the over-flowing cup, the source of the imagery could have come from the Greek story of Polyphemus.[42]

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[39] The drawing is in the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.

[40] There is a reproduction in Johnstone, John Martin, p. 69.

[41] Cole's painting is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

[42] The iconographic sources of The Titan's Goblet are discussed in Howard S. Merritt, Thomas Cole (Rochester, New York, 1969), p. 29. This work on Cole formed the catalogue of a touring exhibition. A much fuller examination of the picture is made by Ellwood C. Parry III in 'Thomas Cole's The Titan's Goblet: A Reinterpretation'. Metropolitan Museum Journal, 4 (1971), 123-140.

Cole's 'fountain' is not an emblem, or a devotional marker, like Colman's; it does no more than fantasize about ancient legends. Nevertheless, it is of interest to see that Cole, who shared Colman's burden to sermonize visually on human destiny, and who also shared with him a background in English Dissent, was so obviously fascinated by the goblet as a life-sustaining symbol, its precious water controlled by an enormous, super-human power.

One of the most charming of Samuel Colman's paintings is a watercolour of The Garden of Eden (Pl. 130).[43] Adam and Eve are seated close together on a bank beside a spreading fall of water. The serpent is coiled menacingly around the trunk of a tree which leans out over this 'fountain'. In the background the mountainside from which the stream flows appears as an idyllic Romantic landscape.

For his figures, Colman's most likely source of inspiration was the 1827 edition of Milton's Paradise Lost, a two-volume publication, with 'illustrations designed and engraved by John Martin'. Two of the engravings are reproduced in Plates 132 and 133. Pl. 132 shows Martin's visualization of the passage from Book Four, lines 502 ff:

> Aside the Devil turned
> For envy; yet with jealous leer malign
> Eyed them askance.[44]

Pl. 133 shows the mezzotint Martin made for Book Nine, lines 996 ff:

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[43] The picture is in private ownership.

[44] The illustration appears opposite p. 132 in Vol. 1. The engraving of the scene from Book 9 referred to here appears in Vol. 2, opposite p. 97.

She gave him of that fair enticing fruit
With liberal hand; he scrupled not to eat
Against his better knowledge . . .

Here are the river, the willows and the serpent, the palm trees, and Adam and Eve themselves - all arranged approximately as in Colman's painting. In 1828 Thomas Cole based an oil painting of The Garden of Eden on another, similar, engraving in Martin's Paradise Lost set.[45] Nathaniel Currier's print, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is another, later, example of an American 'translation' of the Paradise Lost illustrations.[46] These followers of Martin adopted the horizontal format of his engravings. Colman did not do this; and the composition he worked out achieves some of its success by virtue of being an essentially very simple scene, in which the line of the river falls almost vertically, down the middle of the paper, before the water spreads out under the trees. Even then, the matching clusters of leaves and flowers in the foreground hold the design securely in its upright field.

William Blake's Garden of Eden designs for Paradise Lost are also vertical in arrangement. Morton Paley has remarked that there is, too, a certain kinship between Colman's 'Edenic vegetation' and Blake's, though he puts this down to 'a matter of some common tradition'.[47] Looking at Colman's Garden of Eden from the viewpoint of a Danby scholar rather than a Blake specialist, Eric Adams notes, 'The Garden of Eden is also reminiscent of the [Danby] Leigh Woods pictures, and perhaps even directly connected with the Gaspard Tivolis at Leigh Court (the upright format is otherwise surprising)'.[48] Almost certainly, both these opinions are valid.

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[45] See Ellwood C. Parry III, 'Thomas Cole and the Practical Application of Landscape Theory', New Mexico Studies in the Fine Arts, 3 (1978), 13-22 (pp. 15-17).

[46] See Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, 'Revivalist Themes in American Prints and Folksongs 1830-50', American Printmaking Before 1876: Papers presented at a symposium held in the Library of Congress, June 12 and 13, 1972 (Washington, D.C., 1975), pp. 34-46 (p. 38).

Colman's approach to the illustration of the story of Adam and Eve produces, in common with Blake's way of handling it, a strongly symmetrical design and stylized arrangements of flowers and foliage which are quite archaic in the clarity of their details - rather like the innocent flowers and leaves in late medieval and Northern Renaissance paintings and tapestries. In Blake's Raphael Warns Adam and Eve (which is one of his Paradise Lost illustrations, 1808) the figures in the foreground are framed by an elegant arch of vines and lilies, and the angel points to the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil' which is shaped like a fountain, and stands entwined by the serpent in the centre of the distant landscape, directly behind Eve.

Blake's Garden of Eden includes an ostrich and a number of four-footed animals. Apart from the serpent, there do not appear to be animals in Colman's Garden. In the nineteenth century Bibles were often illustrated with engravings of the Garden of Eden based on the interpretation of the scene by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625). These engravings emphasized the abundance of life in Eden, with detailed attention being paid to the vegetation as well as to the animals and birds. Blake must have been familiar with this formula, and it would be surprising if Colman did not also know it very well. In the United States, a number of years later, Erastus Salisbury Field painted a Garden of Eden which blends a Martinesque landscape with toy-like animals and precise, stiff trees and smaller flowering plants which appear to descend from the Brueghel prototypes.[49]

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[47] Letter to Margaret Whidden, 10 April 1985. For reproductions of Blake's Paradise Lost illustrations, carried out for Thomas Butts in 1808, see Butlin, William Blake, catalogue numbers 216-227.

[48] Letter to Margaret Whidden, 23 July 1985.

The absence of animals from Colman's Garden of Eden may simply mean that he found them to be unnecessary in a picture which had to do, not with creation, but with the threat of evil posed by the snake. John Martin did not crowd his Paradise Lost landscapes with the friendly beasts Adam is seen naming in Creation pictures. On the other hand, the presence of the waterfall is more noticeable in Colman's watercolour than the absence of animals. So the association which Dr Adams has suggested between Colman's landscape and Danby's Bristol pictures and their models in seventeenth-century paintings is worth examining a little more closely. I can pin down no specific link between The Garden of Eden and any painting or drawing by Danby. However, the Gaspard Poussin views of the Cascatellas of Tivoli may well have been of particular interest to Colman.[50] The P.J. Miles collection at Leigh Court, near Bristol was open to the public, by arrangement, and Colman could have seen the famous Altieri Claudes in the collection, besides pictures by the Poussins, Rubens, Titian, and a few 'modern' artists such as Benjamin West.[51] One of the Gaspards reproduced in Adams's book (his Plate 27) shows the Cascades of Tivoli from an angle which allows the viewer to see a V-shaped spread of water at the base of the falls, not unlike that in Colman's waterfall, just below the serpent.

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[49] There is one version of Field's Garden of Eden in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and another in the Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont.

[50] See Adams, Plates 27 and 28.

Besides the Leigh Court pictures, there would, of course, have been any number of views of waterfalls available to Colman as engravings in books, or as paintings in the exhibitions he visited in Bristol and in London. Quite evidently, there was no one view sketched and painted, and then labelled 'The Garden of Eden'. Plates 134 to 139 make this clear, and give us some idea of how a simple landscape could be rearranged and made to fit the requirements of Colman's personal vision as a poetic landscapist.

Plate 134 shows a pencil drawing of a torrent falling over rocks in a ravine. A crude bridge with a figure standing on it crosses the stream near the top of the picture. Slender trees flank the water. Plate 135 is a detail of a signed pencil drawing. Here again, Colman presents a fast-flowing river with trees and bushes growing on its banks and a bridge crossing it, high up in the picture space. As in Plate 134, the scene is conventional, but also believable. Yet it is noteworthy, in view of certain prominent features of the imaginative landscape that can be seen in _The Garden of Eden_, that, while these drawings have nothing in them that Colman could not have seen in Wales, perhaps, or even nearer home, they demonstrate a preference for tumbling water and large rocks, organized in a predictable way. In Plate 134 the trees standing at the right, nearer the bridge, should be noticed, for they appear again in other drawings, and in The Garden of Eden; and in Plate 135 the large tree bending over the water seems to be a picturesque device (or a real tree which looked picturesque) admired by Coleman and repeatedly used in his compositions. Plate 136 brings together the rushing stream, the bridge, the upright trees at the right, and the big tree curving across the river. The rocks in the stream are shaped like those in the other drawings - one in particular, a bold box shape, projecting from the torrent. Like the cascade at Tivoli (and, it must be confessed, like the cascade at Powerscourt, and like many other famous waterfalls) this energetic river flows downhill in one uncompromising path.[52] The rounded arch of the stone bridge at the top of the cascade is also in keeping with the bridge at Tivoli - and with many a suitably British bridge too. What is more important is that there is a willow tree in this drawing - a conventional detail not introduced into either of the other sketches, and a little surprising in the kind of weather-beaten landscape presented here.

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[51] See Fawcett, _The Rise of English Provincial Art_, p. 81.

In Plate 137 the landscape has been consciously developed as The Garden of Eden.[53] This is a delicate drawing, in pencil. The wild river has been tamed, and stretched to cover a longer route down a distant mountainside, finally widening out, as in the waterfall in Plate

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[52] There is a notable view by George Barret of Powerscourt Waterfall (painted about 1764) in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. An engraving of the falls by Wallis, after Kirchhoffer appears (opp. p. 48) in G.N. Wright's Ireland Illustrated (London, 1832).

[53] There are other sketches by Colman which include prominent waterfalls and bridges. Those chosen do not necessarily form a set, or demonstrate a linear progression from a naturalistic drawing to the stylized Garden of Eden.

134. The tree overhanging the water is a refined version of the one in Plate 136, and the upright trees on the right bank of the stream have been transformed into exotic plants linked by creepers. A strange low evergreen tree interrupts the falls at the left. The foreground is filled by a fanciful collection of leaves and flowers, and the winding, ominous snake which helps to identify the scene, for Adam and Eve are very tiny creatures, seated in the middle distance, between two of the trees.

Another drawing, shown in Plate 138, is also helpful since it presents an odd merging of pine with willow and other trees, a quaint mingling which seems to have appealed to Colman, as the book of lithographs shows, and as various other drawings indicate.[54]

Finally, in the painting of The Garden of Eden, the transformation of raw 'scenery' into a meditative, psalm-like visual poem is complete. There is no bridge, to suggest civilization, and the sky has gone, so that the wonderful stream which dominates the little picture, acknowledges no visible source. This is the river which 'went out of Eden to water the garden' as described in Genesis 2.10. From the garden, the river flowed on, dividing into four 'heads' which gave life to all the land round about. Colman may have been remembering this generous characteristic of God's landscape design when he made the stream and its cataract such important features of his painting. In a sense, the water may even represent God himself, the 'alpha' of Revelation 21.6, the 'fountain of the water of life'. After the serpent's success in the Garden of Eden, the generosity of God still promised 'unto him that is athirst' the free gift of the water of life; and this painting would appear to be Samuel Colman's acknowledgement of that promise. It is pleasing to see that, in recording his vision of Eden, the drawing teacher, whose sketches of picturesque scenery look so ordinary, was capable of working a little magic on the hackneyed gestures of his pencil sketches to create this original and lyrical landscape.

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[54] See Catalogue for details.

According to Proverbs 25.26, 'A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring'. Not all the fountains or streams of water mentioned in the Bible are types of Christ's love. Psalm 137 is a lament sung at the waterside by the Jews in captivity. The 'rivers of Babylon' would have seemed to them 'corrupt' and 'troubled', bitter waters to those who 'remembered Zion'.

> By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? (verses 1-4)

One of the most delightfully naive of Colman's watercolours is an illustration of this beautiful Bible poem.[55]

Once again, the general idea for his composition seems to have been worked out for Colman by John Martin. Plate 142 shows the wood-engraving of Psalm 137 by T. Williams, after Martin, which appears in the Illustrations of the Bible published serially in London, from March 1834, until April, 1835 (and in octavo and quarto bound editions in 1835 and 1836). Illustrations of the Bible, which involved prints of original drawings and paintings by John Martin and Richard Westall, was an enormous undertaking, and was very well publicized, so it is hardly surprising that Colman's version of Psalm 137 reflects Martin's design. The sepia drawing reproduced in Plate 141 shows just how close Colman's design came to Martin's at one stage.[56] In each case the format is horizontal and the distant city is spread out at a fairly low level, dominated by the Tower of Babel.

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[55] See Plate 140. The painting is signed, 'S. Colman' and inscribed '137 Psalm'. It is owned by descendants of the artist.

Nevertheless, the drawing also demonstrates Colman's fondness for a grouping of evergreen and willow, with other, more vertical trees. There are no cedars or pine trees in Martin's illustration of the scene, or certainly none in the foreground. Among Colman's drawings (Pl. 143) there is a view, in pencil, of a waterside cottage with a huge pine or cedar standing in the foreground.[57] Other trees and bushes grow nearby and form a group similar to the cluster of trees in the Psalm 137 drawing, although there is no willow in the cottage scene. This 'naturalistic' drawing is watermarked 1842, and as the handling of the trees by the cottage and of the trees 'by the rivers of Babylon' is very similar, there is every reason to suppose that the Psalm 137 drawing, and the closely related watercolour, are both late work, dating from the last three years of Colman's life.

Apart from the introduction of his favourite trees, Colman made other contributions to the illustration of the Psalm. Martin's interpretation of the scene concentrates on the lamentations of the Hebrews, who are shown on the right. Beyond the water and the willows

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[56] The drawing belongs to another branch of the family descended from Colman.

[57] See Catalogue for further details.

Babylon is indicated as a vaguely Middle Eastern city, identified by the enormous ziggurat on the middle of the horizon. Colman, on the other hand, fills the distant, low-lying landscape with action. Boats can be glimpsed on the river. Workers can be seen carrying burdens on their heads. Buildings stand above the plain, looking rather like nineteenth-century warehouses. The Tower of Babel itself is encased in scaffolding, so that the artist appears to have been conflating the account of the building of the tower (Genesis 11.1-9) with the story of the Captivity, traditionally considered to have taken place over 1600 years later.[58] It is possible that Colman intended to point to the foolish pride of the evil city by this reference to an outrageously ambitious enterprise which brought nothing but confusion on those who took part. He may have been bringing this story from Genesis to bear on verse 8 of Psalm 137, which reads: 'O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us'.

For the watercolour version of this scene, Colman adopted a more compact, upright arrangement, although, as the reproduction shows, the big group of trees became more open than in the drawing, and much more fanciful in detail. Notice, for instance, the garlands of creepers, similar to those in The Garden of Eden. The Tower of Babel is more clearly visible, though still propped up by ladders and scaffolding. It tapers to a narrow point in the clouds overhead, among wheeling birds. The horizon is much higher than in the drawing, with a hillside supporting buildings and trees and terraces which may, perhaps, indicate the famous

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58 See II Kings 24 and 25 and II Chronicles 36.5-23 for the account of the conquest of the Jews in the late seventh century B. C. by Nebuchadnezzar's forces, and the beginning of the seventy years of exile for survivors, in Babylon.

Hanging Gardens. In the foreground the water (presumably the River Euphrates) is overhung by the large willow trees and by the grasses on the right. On the far bank of the river a huge crowd of people can be seen, many of them raising staffs in the air, as if in celebration. There are boats on the water, and ducks float closer to the viewer. With the ducks, and also resting on the water, is a peacock - an unlikely swimmer, but possibly justified in this picture of a city noted for its pride and vanity. Taking the words of the Psalm quite literally, Colman has hung several large harps on the willows (something which Martin did too); and under the trees on the right, near their tents, the captive Hebrews kneel in sorrow, resisting the urging of the Babylonians to sing 'one of the songs of Zion'.

Another picture which, like Psalm 137, appears to date from late in Samuel Colman's career, is the oil painting in the Tate Gallery known as The Temple of Flora (Pl. 144). To an even more marked degree than the trees in the drawing for Psalm 137, the impressive cedar and the accompanying, more delicate, trees in this picture look like those growing by the cottage in the drawing watermarked with the date 1842 (Pl. 143). There is therefore some reason to believe that the unknown person who inscribed The Temple of Flora with a false Danby signature and the date 1840 knew what he or she was about, as far as the date was concerned.

As in the case of other pictures already discussed, The Temple of Flora presents an imagined, envisioned landscape, a refinement of details of the observed world, and an 'ideal' combination of objects and natural phenomena recorded from nature, or from works of art. Where the drawing shows a sturdy cedar, with strong roots, the cedar in the oil painting is more slender, straighter, its roots hidden in the grass and leaves around its base. In the drawing there are picturesque, but rather ordinary cottages. The painting includes a little temple. For the rough farm gate at the left in the drawing, the painting substitutes an altar for incense. This altar, with the nymphs in classical costume in attendance, and the temple on the mountainside, provide the excuse for the present title of the painting. However, there is also convincing evidence that this picture is a Christian meditation, and yet another example of the work of Colman as 'prophet and psalmist', painting a 'poem' on the theme of the fountain.

The Bible text which may prove the point this time is the Song of Solomon, the Canticles. 'A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed', we read in Chapter 4, verse 12. Verse 15 adds that this 'sister' or 'spouse' is 'a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon'.

An immediate iconological difficulty suggests itself here, for Colman must have known, from medieval and Renaissance depictions of the Virgin Mary, that the 'garden enclosed' in the Canticles - the 'hortus conclusus' - was generally associated with Mary, a symbol of her virginity. He might also have had access to some version, or derivative of the Biblia Pauperum (c.1300) or the Speculum Humanae Salvationis (c. 1334) which were notable illustrated books, produced in Germany, demonstrating the use of typology, by matching pictures of the New Testament antitypes with parallel scenes showing Old Testament types or antecedents. These would have tended to emphasize the association of the 'spouse' in Solomon's Song with Mary. The fountain would also have been taken to symbolize the Virgin.

On the other hand, if he consulted Matthew Henry's Exposition, Colman would have found that the 'fairest among women' in Solomon's Song was to be associated unquestionably with the True Church. The great commentator calls the book an allegory, and 'a parable, which makes divine things more difficult to those who do not love them, but more plain and pleasant to those who do'. Then he goes on to say (and both these quotations are taken from the introduction to the commentary on Solomon's Song, on page 786 of Volume Three of the Exposition) that this book of the Bible is an 'Epithalamium, or nuptial song, wherein, by the expressions of love between a bridegroom and his bride, are set forth and illustrated, the mutual affections that pass between God and a distinguished remnant of mankind'. This was a normal Protestant interpretation, supported by cross-references within the Bible. In Isaiah the metaphor of the bride is often applied to Jerusalem itself, usually seen as a type of the community of saints in post-biblical times. For example, in Isaiah 62.5 we read, in reference to Jerusalem, that 'as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee'. In the New Testament the same metaphor is taken up again, in Jesus' parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins, waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom at the wedding - a reference of course, to the need for readiness in everyone who expects the Second Coming of Christ. Later still, in Revelation 21.2, John is shown a vision of 'the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'. And in the same chapter, in verse 9, John records the invitation of the angel to 'come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife' - again, the New Jerusalem.

If Matthew Henry, and the metaphors and similes found in the Bible itself did not provide sufficient warrant for a painting of the 'fountain of gardens', Colman could have cited the verbal precedent established by Isaac Watts's hymn, 'The Church the Garden of Christ';

> We are a Garden wall'd around,
>   Chosen and made peculiar Ground;
> A little Spot inclos'd by Grace
>   Out of the World's wide Wilderness.
>
> Like Trees of Myrrh and Spice we stand,
>   Planted by God the Father's Hand;
> And all his Springs in Sion flow,
>   To make the young Plantation grow.
>
> Awake, O heavenly Wind, and come,
>   Blow on this Garden of Perfume;
> Spirit Divine, descend and breathe
>   A gracious Gale on Plants beneath.
>
> Make our best Spices flow abroad
>   To entertain our Saviour-God:
> And Faith, and Love, and Joy appear,
>   And every Grace be active here.

These are the first four stanzas of the hymn. In Stanza Six the poet continues:

Our Lord into his Garden comes,
  Well pleas'd to smell our poor Perfumes,
And calls us to a Feast divine,
  Sweeter than Honey, Milk or Wine.

Donald Davie has analysed this poem in detail, pointing out its topical allusions and the cleverness of Watts's diction.[59]

> 'But it is more important', he adds, 'to recognize the strategy and structure of the whole occasion: how the ancient icon and figure of the hortus conclusus, the garden enclosed, is startlingly renovated by being applied to religious Dissent. For the "We" of the first line - "We are a Garden wall'd around" - is not mankind as a whole, not the whole body of Christians, not even Protestant mankind, but specifically dissenting mankind. For what sense would it make to describe the Church of England as "A little Spot . . . Out of the World's wide Wilderness"? How could this be said of a Church whose head is the reigning Monarch, whose bishops sit as Lords Spiritual in Parliament?'.

Davie then goes on to stress what he calls a 'tribal' identity experienced by Watts and many other Dissenters. Watts, he suggests, was a tribal bard, like David the Psalmist, in his close relationship to the people of the congregation in the Independent chapel in Southampton who first read and sang hymns of the kind just quoted. The Song of Solomon is a book which encourages 'tribal' feeling, perhaps; Matthew Henry, examining Chapter Four, verse 12, remarks that 'the saints are God's hidden ones' and that 'Christ walketh in his garden unseen'.

With this kind of example, would it have been easy for Colman, natural for him, to decide to make a painting also based on the Song of

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[59] A Gathered Church, pp. 28-32. The quotation is taken from pp. 29 and 30.

Solomon - a picture to be enjoyed, like Watts's songs, by a 'remnant' congregation, or family?

Again, Davie shows that, even in Isaac Watts's lifetime, there were hesitations on the part of many Christians about the propriety of the Song of Solomon. Philip Doddridge, who followed Watts as a hymn-writer, and who was also a Dissenting minister, avoided Solomon's Song as material for his own verses; John Wesley condemned the 'gross' expressions in Watts's spiritual poetry; and later Southey (a High Anglican), writing in the 1830s, warned that 'the more pious and refined' among readers might when seeing some of Watts's poetry, 'experience a feeling bordering on disgust'.[60]

On the other hand, as Davie again demonstrates, the Baptist minister, Robert Hall the Elder, was quite capable of appreciating the way in which Watts vividly amplified the Bible's own analogy between earthly and heavenly love. In his Help to Zion's Travellers (1781) Hall quoted admiringly from Watts's poetry, and Davie remarks that Hall's is 'an invaluable example of how carefully, with how much sophistication (literary as well as theological), devout Christians of the eighteenth century read Watts's poetry'.

There is simply not enough known about Samuel Colman to justify a categorical declaration that The Temple of Flora is a visual equivalent of Watts's hymn, based on Song of Solomon, 4.12-16, or that it has any direct application to the Song of Solomon at all. Yet one is faced, again and again in Colman's pictures, with evidence of his having approached Bible texts with the same regard for visual material - for emblems - that is so obvious in the poetry of Watts and of other eighteenth-century writers. Also like Watts, Colman seems to have set out to weave a network of meaning, of associations with a number of texts, around one powerful visual device - the rock, for example, or the fountain. Again, as in Watts, there is no hint in Colman's work of sentimental sweetness. So there is really no reason to suspect him of the prudishness which often accompanies sentimentality and which certainly appeared alongside it in Victorian aesthetics. It may not be utterly simplistic to point out that Colman's very technique, which was decidedly old-fashioned, reinforces the idea that, in some ways, in spite of his evident awareness of what was happening in the English art world in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, he did not grow out of the eighteenth century. If he could go on into the 1830s painting trees, using technical conventions based loosely on those of Richard Wilson and of Wilson's Italian models, then perhaps Colman could also carry with him into the same era an appreciation of the Bible absorbed, through Watts, among other popular authors, during his eighteenth-century childhood and teenage years.

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[60] See Davie, p. 32. The comment on Hall is also from p. 32.

The Temple of Flora may be, after all, a compromise between the eighteenth century's open enjoyment of Song of Solomon and the nineteenth century's hesitations about it. The little temple, which looks so much like a classical allusion, may be intended to look like one, and the nymphs by the altar may be meant to look like figures from a Greek vase, a deliberate attempt by Colman to give the picture social acceptability and yet allow a gentle reference to the words from Canticles which have been quoted above. If it seems that the point is being forced here, it should be added that other paintings by Colman which have appeared to represent classical events have proved much more convincing, on close inspection, as Bible scenes, or as allusions to Bible texts. Two important paintings of this kind - A Romantic Landscape and David and Abigail - will be discussed in Section D; and, as I have shown earlier in this chapter, even The Death of Amelia may be one of Colman's 'Psalms'.

However The Temple of Flora is in a different category from that of Colman's Romantic Landscape or of his David and Abigail in that there is no immediately recognizable central character. David can be spotted in each of these other paintings, although his identity is not necessarily clear; Colman's use of Claude's landscape formulae leaves the subject-matter of the pictures open to question until the details have been looked at closely. In The Temple of Flora the structure of the composition is again classical, perhaps following the conventions favoured by Zuccarelli (1702-88). The prominent spreading tree, just off centre, the tall cypress in the distance, the placid water, the figures in costumes of ancient time - all these features suggest a satisfaction, on Colman's part, with the mid to late eighteenth-century fashion for imitating the Poussins and Claude. And because he is known to have chosen other, more dramatic landscape conventions, based on Salvator Rosa, or on Bruegel (the 'sublime' setting for John the Baptist's sermon, in St John Preaching in the Wilderness, for instance), one is tempted to believe that Colman's purpose in painting this little landscape was nothing more than to produce a pleasant, saleable view. The motivation might have been a visit to Stourhead. This painting, with its lake and bridge, and the little temple on the hillside, is reminiscent of the gardens laid out at Stourhead by Henry Hoare; and as Stourhead is not very far from Bristol and even closer to Revd Yeatman's house at Sturminster Newton, where Colman was apparently welcome in the 1820s, the famous beauty spot might have been within range for a sketching trip by Colman when he lived in Bristol.

Whether or not Colman went to see Stourhead, he may have been familiar with the eighteenth-century concept of the 'poetic garden' in which a real garden could take on meaning, become a topos, through the introduction of emblematic features, such as flowers or trees of carefully chosen species planted in significant relationship to one another, or buildings with specific mythological association. At Stourhead, visitors were asked to follow a particular route, so that they would see the various garden ornaments and little temples in the correct order, the sequence which would allow them to appreciate the literary programme of the garden. This programme, it seems, drew a parallel between Hoare and Aeneas, and Stourhead was therefore to be regarded as a new Rome. However, as Ronald Paulson indicates, the 'statement' of this three-dimensional allegory, was 'at its most general . . . about the course of man's life on earth and ultimately about his choice between a life of duty and a life of retirement and contemplation'.[61] Elsewhere there were other garden themes. Pope's garden in Twickenham was dedicated to his mother and featured emblems of motherhood. Colman's painting of a garden may be his own modest contribution to the genre, with the literary text to be found in the Bible rather than in Virgil. And if the meaning of the picture seems obscure, it could be, as I have suggested, that the artist intended it to be hidden from those who had what

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[61] Emblem and Expression, p. 30.

Matthew Henry defined as 'corrupt affections'. In creating a 'tribal totem' the true meaning of which was legible only to a privileged 'remnant of Israel', Colman would also have been doing something very typical of the eighteenth-century subject-painter; he would have been challenging his viewers to a game based on what Paulson terms 'Ripan semantics and syntax'.

Given time for further probing, 'Ripan semantics' may be found to be the key to the meaning of Colman's painting of the garden. He may have been going right back, like Watts, to the 'icon' of the 'hortus conclusus'. Francis Quarles, whose popularity with eighteenth-century (and even with some notable nineteenth-century) writers has already been remarked on, took texts from Canticles as the 'mottoes' for more than a dozen of his Emblems, Divine and Moral (1635). For these emblems, Quarles contributed the poems, as 'commentaries' on the emblems. The wood-engravings, however, were closely based on those in Jesuit emblem-books published in Antwerp a few years previously - the Typus Mundi (1627) and the Pia Desideria (1624). And, it is important to note, the 'sacred gardens' which are illustrated in these books owe their appearance to engravings in older collections of emblems (like those of Alciati, the sixteenth-century anthologist) based on themes of 'profane love' drawn from classical mythology. As Mario Praz points out, 'in all these [Christian] emblems, we find, instead of the classical quotations of the love emblems, sacred texts which suggest the same pictures'.[62] Just as in Colman's painting, the figures in Quarles's little scenes might be characters from Roman poetry. In fact, in Emblem 2 of Book 5 (which is based on Canticles 2.5), Quarles even uses words which refer back to the 'profane' tradition: 'Virgins, tuck up your silken laps, and fill ye/ With the fair wealth of Flora's magazine'. At the end of the stanza he adds, 'but above the rest,/ Let Jesse's sov'reign flow'r perfume my qualming breast'. Since Colman did not provide his viewers with an inscription for his Temple of Flora, we are left to discover for ourselves the link he is making with 'Jesse's Sov'reign flow'r'.

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[62] Studies in Seventeenth-century Imagery, p. 146.

Now it remains to be seen what suggestions are offered in The Temple of Flora of particular conventional emblems, or of objects which might have emblematic stature, when associated with the symbolic language of Song of Solomon.

Describing her 'beloved' in Solomon's Song 5.15, the heroine says: 'His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars'. If the strange fountain which I have called The Fountain of Life is an emblem of Christ, the handsome cedar occupying more than ordinary space in The Temple of Flora is surely just as credible as a symbol of the Saviour.

The Cedar of Lebanon, Cedrus Libani, is a mountain tree, still fairly abundant in Lebanon.[63] It may reach thirty feet in height, and has a durable and fragrant wood, so that it is no wonder that it was prized by Solomon and that he used the cedar in the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, having sent to Hiram, king of Tyre, for 'cedar trees out of Lebanon' (1 Kings 5.6). Emblematists in the Renaissance recognized the cedar as a symbol of Christ, and specialist writers on the

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[63] See Michael Zohary, Plants of the Bible (London, 1982), pp. 104, 105.

'hortus conclusus' also identified the tree with Jesus. Henry Hawkins, for example, in Partheneia Sacra (1633), praised the cedar for its height. 'The glorie of Christ', he says, 'is very aptly signified' by this magnificent tree.[64] The cedar sometimes appears in traditional paintings of the Immaculate Conception or of the Crucifixion. The anonymous artist of the Lucchese Immaculate Conception (Lucca, Pinacoteca) included a tree intended, by its inscription, to represent a cedar; and Fra Angelico's Deposition (S. Marco, Florence) also shows a cedar.[65]

Even if Colman had none of these authorities at his disposal (which would be surprising, in view of his obvious knowledge of emblems and of traditional symbolism, as acknowledged in other paintings) Matthew Henry's commentary, or someone thoroughly familiar with that great work, would have been able to tell him that Christ as a 'goodly person' is symbolized in the words of Song of Solomon 5.15. It is useful to remember that Matthew Henry's introduction to the book points specifically to the secrecy of the garden and tells readers that 'the souls of believers are as gardens inclosed', and that 'Christ walketh in his garden unseen'. In other words, Colman is likely to have understood the garden in Solomon's Song to have several applications, and in particular, to symbolize the faithful Dissenting congregation and, even more private, 'inclosed', the individual Christian possessed of a true faith in Christ. This faith, and the assurances that come with it, could set that believer apart, make him clean and separate, though all the while he might live in the world and go about ordinary business. Such an interpretation would account for the absence of the 'beloved' bridegroom from the garden pictured in The Temple of Flora. The magnificent cedar is there to stand for the invisible 'beloved'.

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[64] There is a 1971 facsimile of Hawkins's book, issued by the Scolar Press, Menston, Yorkshire. The quotation is from p. 156.

[65] For more details of the history of the tree as a Christian symbol, see Mirella Levi d'Ancona, The Garden of the Renaissance, pp. 84-86.

With the cedar identified with Christ, the other details in the painting take on appropriate meaning, fitting in easily with the imagery given in the Bible texts.

To the right of the cedar, the pool of water appears 'inclosed' by the bank on the right, the overhanging trees, the profusion of water plants in the foreground, and the flower-decorated stretch of grass to the viewer's left. High on the left, stairs lead to the little 'temple' and a hillside rises steeply above the level of the temple. The hill may represent the 'mountain of spices' mentioned at the very end of Song of Solomon (Chapter 8, verse 14) or the 'mountain of myrrh' or the 'hill of frankincense' referred to in Chapter 4, verse 6. Matthew Henry interprets the 'mountain of spices' as heaven. In Chapter 2 (verse 8) the 'beloved' is said to come 'leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills'. Colman is likely to have read this text to indicate the readiness of Christ as bridegroom to come to the apocalyptic marriage with his church. In the painting there are figures on the stairs which connect the garden (the earthly situation of the church) with the mountain (heaven) and the temple (the throne of God in the New Jerusalem). It is not clear just who these figures are. They may be the 'companions' of the 'bride' who 'hearken' to her voice, according to Chapter 8, verse 13. Matthew Henry says that these companions are the members of the 'community of saints'.

On the left of the scene, in the middle distance, there are, as I have noted, women in classical costumes attending to an altar. Smoke ascends from the altar, and the five women appear to be bringing to it baskets of fruit or nuts, or perhaps the spices which are so frequently described by Solomon: 'spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices . . . Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out' (Chapter 4, verses 14 and 16). Watts, in verse 4 of the hymn quoted already in this chapter, reminds his readers of what the spices mean:

Make our best Spices flow abroad
  To entertain our Saviour-God:
And Faith, and Love, and Joy appear,
  And every Grace be active here.

The 'active' female figures by the altar in Colman's painting may be his personifications of the virtues Watts names. On the bridge to the right, other women make their way to the altar, crossing the 'streams from Lebanon' and thus, perhaps, coming out of the world, into the security of the true church (which is the interpretation Matthew Henry gives to the call made by the bridegroom to his bride in Chapter 4, verse 8). These women also bring baskets laden with nuts or fruit.[66] Above them the sky is a delicate pastel, a mingling of pale pink and cream and blue, as if to picture, literally, the breaking of day and the shadows fleeing away, which is imagery used in Chapter 4, verse 6, of Solomon's Song, as well as elsewhere in the book.

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[66] I am much indebted to Martin Butlin for checking on the details of the figures and foliage in The Temple of Flora and helping me to interpret the various activities of the women in the picture.

In the lower left of this 'garden of Perfume' (Watts's description of the scene set by Solomon) there are three women. The nearest girl holds a leafy branch, as if gathering perfumed leaves, or nuts; the garden is described in verse 11 of Chapter 6 as a 'garden of nuts'.[67] Behind the 'nut-gatherer' one of her companions holds a basket of flowers which resemble peonies or roses. Two of the women look outwards, toward the water. Could Colman have been thinking of the first two verses of Chapter 6 of Solomon's Song? These read: 'Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.' If this was his text, Colman would have seen it as a representation of faith in an unseen Saviour, and of that Saviour's appreciation of the beauty of the church.

Now it becomes apparent why it is important to note the symbolic nature of the cedar as Christ. A tree like this has rich iconographic possibilities. It can stand for Christ, the second Adam, in a new-made Garden of Eden, complete with its river or spring (an image noticed by Matthew Henry). This Christ is the 'rod out of the stem of Jesse', the 'Branch' of the humble family of Jesse, the father of King

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[67] It would be very interesting to know whether or not Colman meant to picture nuts here, and also what kind of nuts he had in mind. Michael Zohary says (in Plants of the Bible, p. 64) that the reference to nuts in Song of Solomon, 6.11 is the only instance in the Bible of the use of the Hebrew word 'egoz' which means 'walnut'.

David, prophesied by Isaiah (11.1); and so in this capacity it can be associated with the familiar symbol of the Tree of Jesse ('Jesse's Sov'reign flow'r') often made one with the Tree of Life. Isaiah also describes the Messiah as a 'root out of a dry ground', a 'tender plant' (53.2) and Matthew Henry provides the connection between this text and the passage in Ezekiel which refers to the transplanting of the twig ('a tender one') from the 'highest branch of the high cedar' to become a 'goodly' tree. This is a reference, it seems, to the revival of the Jewish kingdom under Zerubbabel, after the Captivity, and to the later replacement of the secular power of the Jews by the spiritual power of Christ, who was of the royal line of David. Quarles makes an open association between Adam and Christ the 'root out of a dry ground' in a late poem called 'Buried in a Garden'.[68] The 'second Adam', he says, appears in the garden, 'not as one dead,/ But as a living Plant set in a bed:/ Set in the Spring, and without aid of showres'.

Shaped like a provident fountain, the cedar in The Temple of Flora stands, rooted beside the spring, so that it may be described as 'married' to the 'fountain of gardens'. In one sense, it has 'come into' the garden and symbolizes the 'beloved' in Solomon's poem. But, at another symbolic level, the cedar is Adam, who united with Eve to generate all humanity. A third layer of meaning shows the tree as Christ, who is joined with his church in a spiritual marriage. Jesus is also the metaphorical spring from which the rivers of the gospel flow. Described in another way, the church is part of the body of Christ, just as Eve was formed out of one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2.21-24). As for the 'companions', the women who come to the garden to gather nuts and 'pleasant fruits', these are converts to the church and become part of the church, members of the same spiritual body.

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[68] Hosanna, or Divine Poems on the Passion of Christ, published posthumously in 1647. There is a reprint, edited by John Horden (Liverpool, 1960). 'Buried in a Garden' appears on p. 16.

At the very end of Solomon's Song the bridegroom calls to his beloved to 'make haste' (8.14). Reading this, Colman would not have missed the obvious association with Revelation 22.17: 'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely'. This invitation to the 'marriage supper of the Lamb' suggests yet another meaning applicable to the grand cedar in Colman's picture. It may contain the mystical idea suggested by Psalm 92, verses 12 and 13, which promise that 'the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God'. If this is so, then not only the 'spouse' but the 'companions' who 'hearken' to her voice will one day, like the cedar, 'flourish in the courts of our God'. One day, like Christ, his saints will be perfect. 'Now . . . it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (I John 3.2).[69]

The mystery, the cloak of what 'doth not yet appear', still encloses the personality of Samuel Colman, and the exact purposes of his art. Yet every one of the 'devotional' pictures which has been examined with the aid of Bible commentaries and hymns and emblem literature has

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[69] Robert Pollok develops this idea in The Course of Time (London, 1827): 'And like/ A cedar, nourished well, Jerusalem grew,/ And towered on high, and spread, and flourished fair' (Vol. 1, p. 248).

'revealed itself', so to speak, as an emblem of Christ. What is more, his noticeable preoccupation with the fountain - in the river which watered the Garden of Eden, flowed from the Rock, and became a 'well of living water' in the 'garden of nuts', a 'fountain of the water of life' which has its source in the throne of God - this interest testifies to the artist's pleasure in the continuity, the 'flow' (to use the Bible's own metaphor) of God's promises of grace and of provision for those who accept his plan for their salvation. As a 'Psalmist' in the 1830s, Samuel Colman may have sounded peculiarly old-fashioned. Yet the archaic language of the pictures, overlaid with Romantic vocabulary, is capable of conveying, even now, surprising and pleasing signs of theological vitality and of devotional feeling within the 'tribe' to which Colman gave his allegiance as a Congregationalist.

SECTION D

The Prophet as Apocalyptic Visionary

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Everlasting Inheritance:
Pictorial Metaphors of Christ's Church
and the Rewards of Faith

The Song of Solomon presents the Bible's most exotic picture of Christ and his church. In Chapter Seven I proposed the theory that Colman gave us, in The Temple of Flora, an emblem on Song of Solomon, a meditation on the relationship of the Saviour to his people. Other pictures discussed in the same chapter - The Fountain of Life and The Rock of Salvation in particular - also seem to be emblems in which God's attributes are celebrated. These paintings focus on symbolic objects, ask for our devotion to a Christ or to a Father who can be best imagined by being likened to the rock or to the fountain or to the cedar tree. This chapter, on the other hand, will examine events, rather than objects, which were pictured by Colman. Judging by the Bible commentaries available to him, Colman would have looked on these events from the Old Testament as typologically significant. They would have been paralleled for him by other events in the Bible, and in particular by episodes in the New Testament or in the future history of the world; and the characters portrayed in action in the Old Testament events would have had antitypes later on in history - Christ and the members of his 'true church' being substituted for David and the Children of Israel, to take the example given by the first two of the paintings to be considered.

Perhaps the most elegant, and certainly the most 'Claudian' of Samuel Colman's known landscapes in oil is Abigail Confronting the Army of David, which I shall refer to simply as David and Abigail (Pl. 35).[1]

The story is told in I Samuel, Chapter 25. David, leading a rebel army, and living in the wilderness on such food as could be begged or plundered, sent some of his men to a rich farmer called Nabal to ask for provisions. Nabal, whose name means 'fool', was 'churlish and evil in his doings' (I Samuel 25.3). He refused David's request, and the embassy returned to David empty-handed. Not surprisingly, David reacted angrily. We are told (verse 13) that he 'girded on his sword'; and, taking four hundred men, he set out to take vengeance on Nabal for his inhospitality. Fortunately, warning of this was given to Abigail, Nabal's wife, who was 'of a beautiful countenance' and possessed of common sense and diplomacy besides. What happened next is the part of the story described in Colman's painting:

> Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. (verses 18-20).

In the picture, on the right, David's column of soldiers can be seen approaching, zig-zagging down the hillside. David, in full military gear, with a servant holding his horse, stands at the head of the procession, watching the arrival of Abigail. The heroine has already dismounted from the donkey and is walking across the open ground in the centre of the scene. Maidservants who have followed her instructions to precede her are already setting out fruit, including a pineapple and other delicacies, on a white cloth spread on the ground in front of David. Other servants are carrying baskets of fruit or looking after the ass which stands in the middle distance. Far on the left, beyond the pasture land with sheep grazing, can be seen Nabal's house, with smoke rising up gently into the sky above it. The land round about this estate is lush, with pools of water, and graceful trees, while the terrain on the right is much more rugged, as befits the 'wilderness' where David's forces had been living.

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[1] The longer title, as supplied by me, was the one used when the painting was put up for auction at Sotheby's, London, on 2 March 1983. The picture was previously known as Terentia Welcomes Maecenas after the Battle of Actium. However, the details of the figures suggested a Bible subject and my husband helped me to identify the scene with the story of Abigail.

The story goes on to tell us that David was pleased with Abigail's generous gift of food, and with her apology for Nabal's rudeness. 'Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood' (verse 33). Abigail went home, to find her husband holding a feast and getting 'very drunken'. The next morning, when she told him about her encounter with David, Nabal had a heart attack and died about ten days later. David heard about the death of the farmer and made Abigail one of his wives. The Bible account indicates that Abigail felt honoured to be invited to go to David, although at this stage he was still an outcast. For Colman, the willingness of this woman to submit herself to David, and to marry him while he was an outlaw, would have been 'typical' of the Christian church, or of groups of God's loyal followers, who are willing to be faithful to the Lord, even when this means suffering. At last, like

Abigail, they will have a part in the 'inheritance of the kingdom'. 'The Lord knoweth the days of the upright', says Psalm 37, verse 18, 'and their inheritance shall be forever'. Matthew Henry, commenting on the story of Abigail, says that 'they who join themselves to Christ, must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him'.

In David and Abigail Colman came closer than in any other landscape to the paintings by Claude which he evidently admired so much. This is partly due to the fact that the figures are, as in a Claude composition, quite small and unimportant compared to the trees, the pools of water, the mountains, and the lovely delicate sky. The pleasant pale gold lighting effects of which he was capable, and the sensitive handling of clouds are particularly apparent in this scene. Nabal's 'homestead' and the tiny sheep are by no means overstated, but fit into the landscape as if in an actual, observed stretch of countryside. Closer to the viewer, the bright greens of some of the trees are balanced by strong colours in the figures, especially those in David's troops, and the general effect is one of richness and of a degree of restraint and order less noticeable in any other picture by Colman which has appeared to date. The rock formations at the left, though handled more freely than those in St John Preaching in the Wilderness, are similar in shape; so there is some suggestion here that Colman was following a favourite convention, or perhaps even that he was describing rocks he was familiar with in the Bristol area - though the former idea is the more likely to be correct, in view of the picturesque arrangement of the trees, predictable in someone so obviously following Claude on one occasion, Salvator on another. All in all, this very attractive painting would appear to date from a mature, but not late phase of the artist's career, some years after St John Preaching, perhaps, but well before the very stylized Temple of Flora, or The Vision.

More obviously a landscape fantasy than David and Abigail, the Romantic Landscape (Pl. 51) shares with it an open statement of the painter's admiration for Claude. There is a similar, though less naturalistic, display of far distant water and hills towards the left, though, in the left foreground, Colman has replaced the spurs of rock shown in David and Abigail with a temple portico of curiously impractical proportions, clearly inspired by classical porches seen in paintings by Claude, or perhaps even by Turner. As in David and Abigail, a pool of water appears in the immediate foreground, and, again, a procession curves away to the right.

The Romantic Landscape also bears a resemblance, in composition, to Francis Danby's Embarkation of Cleopatra, commissioned by John Gibbons and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1827. Danby's picture was engraved by E. Goodall for the Literary Souvenir in 1828, so Colman would have had opportunities to see this reproduction - even if he did not go up to London for the Academy exhibition.[2] Colman's painting shows elegant trees not unlike Danby's, oared boats, foreground urns or incense pots, and the oval pool. Besides this, like Danby, Colman also decorated the columns of the nearest building in his picture with fabric hangings. However, this similarity should not mislead us; Colman was again painting a biblical scene, not an event from Anthony and Cleopatra. It might be imagined that an appropriate biblical equivalent to The Embarkation of Cleopatra would be a 'Solomon and the Queen of Sheba' subject. But closer examination discloses no single female figure outstanding enough to be identified with the Queen of Sheba. There is a young man, not a woman, at the head of the procession, and this would appear to be none other than King David, dancing before the ark of the Lord.

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[2] The engraving is reproduced in Pl. 52.

If this interpretation is correct, the Bible text primarily used by the artist would have been the brief account of how the ark was brought to Jerusalem after its rescue from the Philistines. The story is told in II Samuel 6.12-23 and a fuller version is given in I Chronicles, chapters 15 and 16. Here are the relevant highlights of the story, as it appears in the first book of Chronicles:

> And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent (15.1) . . . And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the Lord unto his place (verse 3) . . . And the children of the Levites bare the ark of the Lord upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord (verse 15) . . . And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen (verse 27) . . . Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps (verse 28) . . . And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart (verse 29) . . . So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God (Chapter 16.1).

On the left of the painting can be seen the 'houses in the city of David'. The setting is therefore intended to represent Mount Zion, which contained the fortified Canaanite or Jebusite city captured by David. The City of David overlooked the Pool of Siloam; and water does appear in Colman's painting. Otherwise, however, he was evidently quite as free in his interpretation of the Bible scene as Claude was when he tackled such subjects as Hagar and the Angel (London, National Gallery).

Colman's vision of the bringing of the ark to the place prepared for it by David is certainly festive. The 'tent' made for the ark is suggested by the heavy curtain ceremonially arranged on the porch of the building. Urns send up smoke, presumably incense, and the marvellous arrangement of flowers to one side of the steps (recalling the flower-basket behind the donkey in St. James's Fair) may be part of the peace offering mentioned in Chapter 16, verse 1. Peacocks are traditional symbols of immortality, so the two shown here may represent the continuity of God's presence with Israel, or the redemptive power of Christ, of whom David was a type. On the other hand, they may simply show that Colman was borrowing a pleasant verse from I Kings 10.22, which reads, 'For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish, with the navy of Hiram; once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes and peacocks'. The ships on the water certainly fit in better with this passage about Solomon than they do with the story of how David 'danced before the Lord with all his might'.

Returning to this account of David and the Ark, we notice that while the carpet is being rolled out in front of the king, the 'handmaids of his servants' (II Sam. 6:20) welcome King David with flowers and palm fronds. The king carries a palm branch and his 'robe of fine linen' is held up by train bearers. Behind him come servants and priests holding items for sacrifice, or perhaps furniture for the tabernacle. As the ark itself approaches, watchers of the procession prostrate themselves on the grass under the trees, while others run joyfully towards the procession. Near the great gateway that leads from the suburbs into the City of

David are the musicians. Like David, they wear long robes, and some can be seen to carry small harps and cymbals. On the left of the scene, through the open portico, can be glimpsed trumpeters and other musicians, including drummers (who look remarkably like members of a nineteenth-century military band). With them on the balcony of the building is a group of women in high-waisted gowns, holding what look like song-books or programmes - Colman's idea of 'psalteries', perhaps. One of these anachronistically equipped women may be Michal, the unfortunate critic of the festivities.

Since Colman was given to compressing several historical episodes into one pictorial space, it is not unreasonable to look at various other passages in the Old Testament which could also apply to this painting and extend its meaning.

For instance, I Samuel 18.6, 7 tells us that, earlier in his career, David's name was celebrated by women of 'all cities of Israel, singing and dancing', praising David for his skill as a warrior, much to the anger of King Saul.

Feasible too as an additional commentary on the Romantic Landscape is a long passage in II Chronicles, chapters 5 and 6, which describes how Solomon, having completed the building of the temple which his father had had it 'in his heart' to construct, sent for the 'elders of Israel' to bring the ark out of the City of David into the new section of Jerusalem built by Solomon higher up, on Mount Moriah. 'And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle' (Chapter 5.5). Solomon presided over a magnificent ceremony. As on the occasion of David's arrival with the ark in his city, Solomon arranged for singers and trumpeters, praising God as the priests brought the ark into the court of the new building. The crowned figure, seated on a throne being carried through the gates which Colman shows in the middle distance, may be Solomon. Onlookers bow down to him, just as other people kneel as the nearer ark passes by. In the shadow of the gateway there are camels, and men bending under loads they carry. The domed city in the background reflects and radiates the brightness of heaven. At the end of the ceremony Solomon prayed, 'Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength; let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness' (Chapter 6.41). A fitting prayer, one might say, for a minister to use at the opening of a new church building in the nineteenth century. Colman's church, Zion Chapel in Bedminster, was opened on 15 June 1830. Although it was an Independent chapel the first sermon was given by the great Presbyterian evangelist, Dr. Thomas Chalmers. He preached from the text in Romans 10.4 which reads, 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth'. The text is a reminder that it is Christ's New Covenant of grace which will bring us salvation, not man's struggle to live by the letter of the law, the Old Covenant. Colman's painting would have been a very suitable memorial to the dedication of Zion Chapel. The entry of David into Jerusalem with the ark of the Covenant was acknowledged traditionally as 'typical' of Christ's triumphal entry into the same city with the promise of his new covenant.[3] That promise was still in effect, still held out to those who would accept the Gospel at any place and any time. In effect, Jesus could enter triumphantly into His house wherever a 'temple' was built for him; and the people celebrating his arrival in their congregational home could look on the occasion as a prefiguration in miniature of the Coming of Christ's Kingdom. The events of 15 June 1830 were accompanied at Zion Chapel by much rejoicing. Writing about the occasion thirty years later, the Rev. M. Caston used the words of King David the psalmist to recall the celebrations: 'Having come into His gates with thanksgiving and entered into His courts with praise, the assembled multitude united in earnest prayer'.[4] Zion's first Account Book shows payments in November and December 1832 for repairs to the 'Bass Viol' and for the services of singers, both men and women. Therefore it seems safe to assume that, like the congregations of the courts of David and Solomon, the Independents of Bedminster made music at the inaugural 'festival' of Zion Chapel.

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[3] See Hebrews, Chapter 8.

As I have indicated (in Chapter One) there is no evidence that Colman was attending Zion Chapel before January of 1833. However, he may have been friendly with members of the chapel much earlier. John Hare, for instance, was at one time a member of Castle Green Chapel, and, as late as 1828, at a time when Colman was a member there, Hare was a Castle Green Trustee.[5] One can be forgiven for picturing the artist mingling unobtrusively with the other worshippers on that festive

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4 Independency in Bristol (London, 1860), p. 161. The quotation is, of course, a paraphrase of Psalm 100, verse 4.

5 The birth of John Hare Jr. is recorded in the Castle Green Register (PRO RG/4 1792 - entry under christenings for December 1786). As Trustee of Castle Green, Hare was party to an official indenture kept now by Page and Company, Solicitors, St Nicholas Street, Bristol.

day in 1830, making a mental sketch of the idyllic fantasy based on the event he was actually witnessing.

In view of Colman's evident fondness for the Book of Isaiah, it would be wrong not to link this romantic landscape, finally, with Chapters 59 and 60 of that prophecy, which contain another apt commentary on the painting. 'And the Redeemer shall come to Zion,' promises verse 20 of Chapter 59, 'and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord'. In Chapter 60 comes the famous call to Israel to rejoice and obey:

> Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God . . . Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought . . . The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee . . . and they shall call thee, The City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel . . . Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended . . . A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.

Matthew Henry says of this passage that 'the happy and glorious state of the church is here . . . foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church, and the spiritual peace of that', adding that 'when God shows some token for good, and proclaims his favour to us, then his glory is seen upon us, as it was upon Israel, in the pillar of cloud and fire'.[6]

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[6] See Matthew Henry's Exposition, commentary on Isaiah 60.15-22 and also Isaiah 60.1-8.

These remarks by the great eighteenth-century scholar remind one that in The Delivery of Israel, in which Colman presents Moses, rather than David, as the type of Christ, the 'glory' of Christ illuminates a people who have, like David's priests and courtiers, or Solomon's subjects, entered into the gates of the temple. In Colman's painting these triumphant Israelites can be seen standing in God's 'holy habitation' (Exodus 15.13). As the Psalmist expresses it, they have come to 'the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased' (Psalm 78.54).

Looking at The Delivery of Israel, or at Colman's other exploration of the subject, the smaller Destruction of Pharaoh's Host, which is even more powerfully focused on the contrast between light and darkness, the nineteenth-century viewer would have appreciated the vividness of the artist's rendering of an actual event, and would also have understood, with commentator Thomas Scott, that 'this is a shadow of the believer's merciful redemption from iniquity and the powers of darkness, and of his being powerfully guided to the holy habitation of God in heaven'. Scott agrees with other scholars in identifying the 'mountain of thine inheritance' (Exodus 15.17) with Mount Zion.

At the end of a long poem entitled 'Types of Christ', Joseph Cottle summed up the attitude of those readers of the Bible who looked at the account of the Exodus or stories of the exploits of David and saw them as prefigurations of the inheritance which would come to those who faithfully awaited 'the brighter day of grace':[7]

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[7] This line, and the stanza following it are quoted from the same poem, in Cottle's Hymns and Sacred Lyrics (London, 1828), p. 72.

In all these symbols clear,
May we, O Lord delight;
And with the just, at length, appear,
Where faith is turned to sight.

The Coming of the Messiah and the Judgement of Babylon (Pl. 79) is the only painting to have come to light in which Samuel Colman attempted to portray Christ directly, rather than purely symbolically. Even here, however, symbolism is the strongest force at work, and this Christ is revealed as the antitype of his Old Testament types, rather than as Jesus, complete in his own humanity.

In the centre of the scene stands Christ the redeemer, in a short tunic and a long white robe marked with blood in the pattern of the Cross. This Messiah is a young man, a warrior, like Cyrus, and, as I commented in Chapter Seven, he has his left foot on the neck of his opponent - standing over the evil foe as victor and judge. The enemy is the serpent, Satan, warned by God in the Garden of Eden that the 'seed of the woman' would 'bruise' his head (Gen. 3.15).

To the left of Christ the Redeemer is the Infant Christ, wreathed in flowers and basking in the morning sunlight. He is a symbol of the future kingship of Christ: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9.6).[8]

Further still to the Messiah's left (the right of the picture) is Christ the Good Shepherd, as described in Isaiah 40.11: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young'. Dressed in blue and red (very possibly to symbolize his constancy and truth, and his sacrifice on the Cross) Jesus the Shepherd guides his flock along the highway that will lead them to green pastures. Near the tangle of briars at the roadside lies a circlet of thorns.

It is fascinating to see that Colman has managed to make these three versions of Christ recognizable without following the rules of old-established Christian iconography. There is no madonna with the Christ child; the triumphant Saviour is young, not the traditional bearded figure with a banner; the Good Shepherd, with his stiffly silhouetted face, looks not unlike a Romanesque illumination, but he is certainly not the friendly, human Jesus familiar since the Renaissance.[9]

As one of the first of those to analyse this painting in the context of other religious art of the nineteenth century, George P.

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[8] Morton Paley interprets this infant in a different way. He sees it as an illustration of Isaiah 11.8: 'And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den'. This reading of the figure fits in well with the obvious reference by Colman, also in the central section of the painting, to the text in Isaiah 11.6 which points to the 'little child' who will one day lead both the 'fatling' and the 'young lion'. Perhaps Colman's depiction of the baby can sustain both interpretations. Dr Paley's discussion of the picture will be included in his forthcoming book, The Apocalyptic Sublime.

[9] Morton Paley (again in The Apocalyptic Sublime), points out that there is a 'strong precedent' for the beardless Christ in Michelangelo's Last Judgement. Colman's 'vision' of Christ will be further discussed in Chapter Nine.

Landow found it unconvincing: 'Coleman [sic] not only failed to reconcile realistic technique with his symbolic intentions, but he also failed to create a visionary art'.[10] It is certainly true that Colman's landscape (which Landow categorizes as 'Wilsonian') appears at first glance to be in a separate dimension from the tiny figures scattered about on it. The main figures look almost painfully crude and bright to the eye expecting to rest upon a Wilsonian or Claudian scene peopled with unobtrusive but nicely arranged characters in period costume. The figures in Colman's picture are awkwardly self-conscious and anything but subtly posed in a tableau.

'The painter has chosen', says Landow, 'to assemble a series of images symbolizing the Messiah, and because they are merely symbols with no narrative interaction they create the static effect of one of Ripa's emblems'. However, an emblem is exactly what The Coming of the Messiah was intended to be - a picture with symbolic, rather than narrative interaction.

Of course Dr Landow correctly identifies the limitations of Colman's method; there is a definite incongruity between the landscape and the figures. As Plates 81 and 84 hint, some of the symbolic 'episodes' in the picture look as if they belong to separate paintings. What the artist has done is to sacrifice overall pictorial unity to the building up of a rich and interesting network of symbols or typologically unified Bible incidents, which are brought together by the painter/preacher in such a way that they focus the viewer's attention on the central emblem of Christ. Elsewhere, notably in The Delivery of Israel, Colman demonstrated his capacity to make a very 'visionary' picture. In The Coming of the Messiah the concentration on emblematic details is so obvious that one receives the impression that the content of the picture was of such importance to the artist that he consciously overrode the rules of landscape composition which he normally obeyed.

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[10] William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism (New Haven and London, 1979), p. 32. The quotation from Landow which follows this one is from the same book, p. 31.

There is one benefit to be seen (apart from the 'sermon' itself) in Colman's approach to the representation of the Saviour. Since he steered clear of attempting to paint a story about Jesus of Nazareth, the artist did not need to try his hand at a naturalistic portrait. The brilliant insight into the humanity of God of a 'naturalistic' painter such as Rembrandt was not demanded of him. Nor did he need to try to achieve authentic and intimate Bible scenes outside the historical iconographic tradition - which, as a Dissenter he might have been tempted to do, had he not chosen to work within the formulae of the emblematist. If Christ is shown as an emblem, his image may not kindle very much emotional response in the viewer. Colman's attempt to define Christ may seem cold, cerebral. But on the other hand he is not guilty of removing from the viewer's concept of Christ the belief that Christ was 'from everlasting to everlasting' (Psalm 90.2). The artificiality of the emblem, and its demands on the viewer's attention to a number of Bible texts, leaves the viewer in charge of his or her own 'vision' of Christ. The 'naturalistic' picture of Jesus, set believably in a Middle Eastern landscape or temple or home, reduces the image of Christ to a picture of how he was as a human being, on earth, and at a given point in time, rather than directing the mind to a member of the Godhead who is altogether beyond time. There may be enormous value in reminding people that Jesus once lived and suffered in a real world; Caravaggio attempted this kind of naturalism in the seventeenth century. However, naturalism can descend very easily into sentimentality; and in the generations following Holman Hunt and his efforts to blend Christian symbolism and authenticity, the image of Jesus on Sunday school picture rolls - and on church windows and in Academy oil paintings - became that of an unbelievable 'softy', a poor, lamb-like victim, deserving pity, and perhaps love, but not respect or trust. Samuel Colman's uses of Christian iconography did not contribute to that sentimental portrait.

This brings us back to the picture of Colman himself introduced already in Chapter Seven. He was a man whose outlook in cultural terms was that of Old Dissent, and of the eighteenth century. He was brought up long before the development of what Erik Routley terms 'a softness at the centre' that took hold of Dissenting and Anglican religion in the nineteenth century.[11] This 'softness' included the pretentiousness of large new churches and chapels, the vulgarity of extravagant church decorations and the sentimentality which often went along with 'dramatic religious demagogy'. Colman would have been used, at least early in his life as an Independent, to listening to 'patient and formal exposition' of the Bible. This 'formal exposition' is just what he is doing in The Coming of the Messiah, and although it must be admitted that a transition to the 'dramatic religious demagogy' of later times is suggested by the apocalyptic scene in the distance, even that scene is pictured in terms sufficiently removed from 'naturalism' to be a pointer to texts, rather than a manipulation of the emotions or an appeal to popular taste.

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[11] English Religious Dissent (Cambridge, 1960), p. 169. The other quotations in the same paragraph are from the same book, pp. 168 and 169.

Colman, as a Dissenter of a conservative mold, would have experienced what Donald Davie admires in 'Calvinist aesthetics': the 'simplicity, sobriety, and measure' of Congregational music, the plain pews of the meeting house, the severe gown of the minister.[12] I am not sure that Colman's painting entirely fits the description of 'Calvinist art' which Davie goes on to give: 'sensuous pleasure deployed with an unusually frugal, and therefore exquisite, fastidiousness'; the landscape is much too lush and the colours too bright. Yet there is an interesting possibility of 'fastidiousness' in the exclusion of sentiment, the absence of any invasion of the characters, any imposition on them of Colman's personal notion of their feelings. Instead he concentrates on showing us just enough about each symbolic figure to remind us of what the Bible says about its meaning.

That meaning, or the meaning of the group of symbolic figures in The Coming of the Messiah as it relates to 'the everlasting inheritance', is what must now be considered. This will involve looking again at some of the details already examined in Chapters Six and Seven, but with the use of a different exegetical filter. To begin with, let us look at the central 'event' shown in the painting: the 'Destruction of Babylon'.

Ronald Parkinson, in his pamphlet on Colman's apocalyptic pictures (as exhibited at the Tate Gallery in 1976), was the first to discuss The Coming of the Messiah in any detail.[13] He drew attention to the lines from Isaiah's vivid forecast of doom which appear to describe the action in the distance: to chapter 13, verse 19, where the prophet says, 'And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah'; to verse 13 of the same chapter, which quotes God's promise that 'I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place'; and to verse four which describes 'the noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of battle'. In Colman's painting the scene does appear to be set for the utter destruction of Babylon, or of 'mystical Babylon', by which - instructed by Revd Thorp - Colman would have understood the Church of Rome. The distant scene in the painting shows the Tower of Babel toppling down, as an angel, high on a rocky mountain, pushes huge boulders over onto the doomed city. Lightning flashes and the city erupts in the panic of battle while from below, it is about to be invaded by a troop of soldiers accompanied by a bishop. In The Destinies of the British Empire Thorp brings together the imagery of a 'mighty angel, standing in the midst of Heaven' and of a Christ who is 'the word of God clothed in a garment dipped in blood', and describes how Christ finally casts down his enemies at the 'great battle of Armageddon'. These foes include 'the false prophet, the symbol of popery, and all the kings of the earth and all their armies'.[14] In Chapter Six I discussed the possible identities of the militant bishop; and Colman's exegesis of the Day of Judgement will be analysed in Chapter Nine. However, the city which is being attacked is not only Babylon, but also Jerusalem, Zion; and if one concentrates on the application of this metaphor to the action shown in the painting, one begins to see that Colman is warning his viewers of the difficulties of coming into the 'inheritance' promised by God, as well as celebrating the joy of the new Eden.

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[12] See A Gathered Church, p. 25. The quotation which follows in my next sentence is from p. 26.

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[13] Samuel Colman: Four Apocalyptic Themes, [p. 12].

[14] This reference is to p. 17. See also p. 22 of the same book.

It is important to remember that Colman's contemporaries often applied the biblical metaphor of Babylon to London. Poets as different as Blake and Wordsworth did this. John Martin made the connection; it was a very common analogy.[15] It was also widely known that the Bible presents cities as symbols of nations and institutions.[16] However, it was equally common knowledge that the metaphors of Babylon and Jerusalem had application to the more general collectives of the wicked and the just. Revd Thorp addresses this point in his Destinies. While identifying Papal Rome with Babylon, he cannot look on Britain as a modern postfiguration of Jerusalem - not at least, in the sense of the British people being latter-day children of Israel. 'National prejudice is a bad interpreter of prophecy', he declares (page 80). He warns his readers against Britain's association with Roman Catholic nations, and pleads for prayers for national repentance. But, ultimately, those who will be saved for Christ's triumphant kingdom, he stresses, will be those who are personally faithful to God. So, while Colman may have had Bristol's political and social upheavals in mind when painting The Coming of the Messiah, he is likely to have been conscious of making any such analogy as a 'figure of speech', in which the fall of Babylon was applicable to the real situation but certainly not with the implication that the Bristol Riots were in themselves the fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah or of St John.

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[15] See Lynn Robert Matteson, 'Apocalyptic Themes in British Romantic Landscape Painting' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1975), Chapter Four.

[16] See John Owen, The Shaking and Translating of Heaven and Earth: A Sermon (1649, republished Edinburgh, 1794).

Samuel Colman was not inventing a grand complex of myths of his own (as Blake had done) to weave into one vision of London the faults of Babylon and the beauties of Jerusalem, or to express in exotic language the ambivalent personality of Jerusalem. But with Blake he was following John Bunyan and a host of preachers in the Puritan tradition in pointing to the threats and promises made by God to a wilful people. In effect God says through his prophets that Jerusalem and her inhabitants must be punished for their waywardness and idolatry, for greed and infidelity. The instruments of punishment will include the armies of hostile nations, though in the end these wicked nations will be destroyed by God (sometimes, again, through human agency) and he will save those few trusting and faithful people who survive the struggle and come to him for care. In the end Zion will be restored; Mansoul will be taken out of the control of Diabolus and returned to the care of Shaddai.

Viewed as a visual sermon on Isaiah, Chapters Nine and Ten, (and to some extent Chapters Two, Three and Thirteen), Colman's painting makes considerable sense. The prophet foretells the coming of a wonderful saviour for the Chosen People; but he also warns the Israelites (for whom Colman would have read Christians) that those who do not serve him faithfully must not expect to go unpunished.

> Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed . . . For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. (Isaiah 9.14-16 and 10.4)

Matthew Henry comments that Israel's 'false prophets were the tail and the rush. . . A wicked minister is the worst of men'. A nation paying attention to preachers of false doctrine must expect to suffer.

Chapter Ten of Isaiah makes it clear that God may choose to inflict punishment on His people by allowing their enemies to deal harshly with them in war: 'O Assyrian', reads verse five, 'the rod of mine anger and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.' Like the king of Babylon, the ruler of Assyria is permitted to 'tread them [the Israelites] down like the mire of the streets' (verse six). The soldiers marching towards the city in Colman's painting should be seen as the forces of God's wrath. Their weapons are the 'weapons of his indignation' (Isaiah 13.5).

The warnings in Chapter Ten are repetitions of those made in Chapters Two and Three. God will punish those who disobey him at any time, just as the Israelites will fall prey to the Chaldeans. Verses 12-17 of Chapter Two appear to have been followed closely by Colman:

> For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

In the foreground of the painting kneels a 'mighty man', his 'lofty looks' humbled as described in verse 11 (of Chapter Two). The book open beneath his sceptre reveals part of the promise in St Paul's Letter to the Philippians (Chapter Two, verse 10) that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow'. (Appropriately, Colman is applying his picture of Isaiah's prophecy to the reference to Christ which Paul made.) Near the king is a painting in a frame, partially covered by drapery and a lyre. This appears to be a 'pleasant picture' as indicated in Isaiah 2.16, probably to symbolize the idols worshipped in Israel and the luxuries people set too much store by at any period. One of the 'ships of Tarshish' (verse 16, again) is sinking in the water in the middle distance (behind the figure of the Lord whose hand is 'stretched forth still'). Matthew Henry says this ship symbolizes Israel's foreign trade, and that, in general, 'when God is bringing ruin upon a people, He can sink all the branches of their revenue'.

Notice in the distance the 'high tower' and the 'fenced walls' of the city. 'For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory ' (Isaiah 3.8).

Returning to Chapter Ten, we read of the promise of hope to the 'remnant of Israel' who remain true to God and survive the conflict between Israel and her enemies (verse 20). And we read, too, of the destruction of those enemies: 'O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction' (10.24,25). God uses the Assyrian as an instrument of His anger, but as Matthew Henry comments, 'it is very common for Him to mean one thing, and them to mean another'. He must put an end to the actions of the wicked. Accordingly, 'the Lord of Hosts shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one' (Isaiah 10.33,34). Matthew Henry says that 'when the Assyrian soldiers were under their arms, and their spears erect, they looked like a forest, like Lebanon'. Colman, however, presents us not only with the soldiers under arms but with the bough 'lopped asunder' and other 'thickets of the forest' damaged. The bough most dramatically sundered in Colman's painting appears to be the branch of an oak (behind the Good Shepherd figure); so there is the strong likelihood that Colman is applying the text to the 'oaks of Bashan' (Chapter 2.13) - that is, to proud Israel as well as to the enemies of Israel.

Since the painting is about promises as well as threats, salvation just as much as damnation, it is not surprising to see Colman making the traditional Puritan contrast between the good and evil elements. I have already pointed out (in Chapter Four) that such contrasts were frequently made by emblematists such as Bunyan. It is intriguing to see that Colman used the landscape in The Coming of the Messiah as a vehicle for the presentation of the particular contrasts he wanted to point up.

On the left one sees a valley filled with the light of God's presence. An angel is seated on a bank among the trees, playing upon a harp. The trunks of the trees are wreathed in flowering creepers. Fruitful vines cluster beneath the large spreading trees further to the left of the scene. And on a grassy slope, near the verge of the water, an ox and a lion graze peacefully together - no doubt in reference to the verse in Isaiah 11.7: 'the lion shall eat straw like the ox'. Gentiles and Jews, according to the commentators, are pictured here in harmony within Christ's latter-day fold.

The centre of the picture is occupied, in the distance, by the battle already examined - the symbolic battle which both purifies a wayward Jerusalem and (later) destroys Assyria and Babylon. Here Colman has painted clouds, and, below them, angry waters, to supply the correct atmosphere.

On the right is represented the wilderness of this world - a wild, mountainous place in which magnificent trees are mutilated, just as the proud enemies of God are cut down (Isaiah 10.17-19, and Isaiah 10.33,34). The remnant of God's people (those who have escaped from Egypt, survived the Assyrian attack on a decadent Israel, come out of Babylon - whatever the case may be) struggle through this inhospitable place towards the Promised Land, the restored Jerusalem, the Peaceable Kingdom. Christ is with them, however, in the Brazen Serpent, the 'Smitten Rock', and the wooden cross. Out of the wilderness a path curves among the trees and emerges at the feet of Christ the Good Shepherd, who guides the leaders of the flock of Israel, the 'redeemed' who are pictured in Isaiah 35.10: 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away'. The prophet puts it another way in Isaiah 11.16: 'And there shall be an highway for the remant of his people . . . like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt'. Matthew Henry says, in his commentary on this verse, that 'those who set their faces heaven-ward, will find there are not such difficulties in the way as they thought there were, for there is a high-way thither'.

The 'high-way' so strongly emphasized in The Coming of the Messiah does act as a visual pointer to the little army going in the other direction, into the dark city. In this way an element of the composition that is obviously symbolic is used to draw attention to a less noticeable detail which is its symbolic opposite. The picture is full of such opposites.

For instance, the true prophet, John, is contrasted with the false prophet, the bishop, on his way into Babylon. The same false prophet has another role, as a shepherd of his flock (the army he is directing in war) and, as such, is in dark contrast to Christ the Good Shepherd, conducting his flock towards the Peaceable Kingdom. To emphasize this point, Colman has included in the foreground the swords and spears beaten into ploughshares and pruning hooks as Isaiah foresaw (Chapter 2, verse 4).

Colman's painting appears, in the final analysis, to be a summary of the message of the Book of Isaiah, introduced in the very first chapter:

> Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it (Isaiah 1.18-20).

The message applies to each human being and to every nation, to the poor and the rich, to beggars and to kings. Christ's gifts of salvation for the faithful and his punishments for the unfaithful are dealt out with justice. Pride, at any level, will be destroyed, for 'the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' as Isaiah wrote in Chapter 2, verse 11.

Once again, Bernard Barton's verses help to make Colman's painting intelligible. 'The Day of Divine Visitation' is from Barton's collection of Devotional Verses published in 1826. The Bible inspiration for the poem is identified as Isaiah 2.11.

Can language utter, - pen record
The wonders of that day
When Zion's righteous Judge and Lord
Asserts His sovereign sway?

Where are thy cedars, Lebanon,
So late uplifted high?
Where are the oaks of Bashan gone,
Whose strength might storms defy?

And thus the glory of the proud
The cedar's lot must know;
The strongest as a reed be bow'd
Like Bashan's oak - laid low.

Like ships of Tarshish - types of art
And wealth, - delight no more:
The pleasant pictures of the heart
Be darkly shadow'd o'er;

And every idol thought can claim
  Abolish'd and o'erthrown,
That so the Lord's exalted name
  May reign and rule alone.

Such is the day, and such the hour
  Of visitation still,
When God ariseth in His power
  To bend and bow the will.

And bless'd are they who through His grace
  In visitation bow,
Who vow, henceforth, to seek His face,
  And keep that solemn vow.

Linking the Quaker poet with Colman in this context brings to mind the fascinating similarities between Colman's work and the religious paintings being carried out in the United States at the same time by the Quaker artist, Edward Hicks (1780-1849). Hicks was almost exactly Colman's contemporary. He spent his life in rural Pennsylvania as a minister and sign painter, producing his famous pictures of the 'Peaceable Kingdom' as a hobby. He was a deeply committed Christian, cousin to Elias Hicks, the 'liberal' theologian among American Friends. Edward Hicks had a long preoccupation with the millennial destiny of the United States. For him, America was the Promised Land and William Penn's treaty with the Indians in 1681 was a covenant of peace. Representing Penn's treaty (inspired by Benjamin West's famous painting) usually more or less in the background of each 'Peaceable Kingdom', Hicks issued repeated tokens of his patriotism and his own interpretation of Isaiah's prophecy.[17] Plate 87 shows one of these paintings.

Hicks was not, of course, alone in seeing America glorified in this way, but among the American painters of the nineteenth century he presented the most confident view of the role of the United States. Thomas Cole and Erastus Salisbury Field, both of whom have already been referred to, were perhaps equally in love with America, but more equivocal in their vision of its future.[18] Samuel Colman's paintings are much more ambitious than those of the Quaker artist, much more complex. However, it is entertaining, and perhaps instructive, to notice that each artist apparently used an engraving after Richard Westall's lamb-like lion and accompanying 'fatling' as a starting-point for the figure group which illustrates the text, 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them' (Isaiah 11.6).

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[17] See Alice Ford, Edward Hicks: Painter of the 'Peaceable Kindom' (Philadelphia, 1952), and Ellwood C. Parry, 'Edward Hicks and a Quaker Iconography', Arts Magazine, June 1975, pp. 92-94. West's painting is now in the Pennsylvania Academy of Arts, Philadelphia. Carried out in 1772, it was very well known among Quakers.

[18] Field was apparently lobbying for social fairness, democracy. Cole, on the other hand, appears to have been afraid of democratic change, and of the industrial revolution in America. This fear may have been a reflection of his experiences among friends who were critics of Reform in England. Cole saw the earth as eternal and renewable, but civilization as doomed by the changes inevitable under the terms of Jacksonian democracy. See Alan Wallach, 'Thomas Cole and the Aristocracy', Arts Magazine, 56 (1981), 94-106. Cole's attitudes to civilizations, to kingdoms, earthly and heavenly, will be returned to later in this chapter.

Westall's 'Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch' was engraved by Charles Heath in 1813, and appeared in the splendid three-volume Bible published by White, Cochrane and Company, of Fleet Street in 1815 (Pl. 88).[19] Much later, in 1829, an oil painting by Westall, entitled 'The Parable of the Kingdom of Christ - Isaiah Ch. 11, v. 6', was included in the fifth exhibition at the Bristol Institution.[20] Therefore, while Hicks's knowledge of the picture was limited to the engraving, Colman may have seen the oil painting in Bristol.

Hicks was much more faithful to the original composition than was Colman. The serious, eager child, in its sensible dress, is a nice foil to the charming animals, placid and cuddly. Colman did not devote so much care to the happy animals of the peaceable kingdom. Instead of following Westall, as Hicks did, in showing the 'branch' or 'twig' in the child's hand as a grapevine, to symbolize both the 'root' which Christ had in the Tree of Jesse and the spilling of his blood on the Cross, he adventurously arranged the lion, the young ox and the lamb (still recognizable as adaptations of Westall's original group of animals) with the little child ahead of them, facing them and leading the beasts by a rope of flowers. This juvenile herdsman is not nearly so delightful as Westall's 'putto', but that pretty infant was perhaps the inspiration for the baby further to the right, interpreted earlier as a Christ child.

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[19] The Martin/Westall Bible, published twenty years later, also reproduced the 'Peaceable Kingdom', but in an engraving by C. Nesbit much less elegant than Heath's.

[20] See the published catalogue, Fifth Exhibition of Pictures (Bristol, 1829), catalogue number 60. The text from Isaiah is quoted in full, as it is with the engraving in the 1815 Bible.

The overt association made by Hicks between the United States of America and the kingdom of Christ is not paralleled in Colman's painting. Nevertheless, the ambiguous character of the foreground king leaves open the possibility that Britain's monarch is here envisioned as laying down sceptre and crown and inviting Christ to build Jerusalem 'in England's green and pleasant land'.[21]

The present discussion of The Coming of the Messiah began with the assertion of its being an emblematic picture before all else. One thoroughly emblematic detail has not so far been discussed. This is the beehive which sits to the king's left, next to the ploughshare and pruning hook. On the right of the king is a helmet lying beside a shield and a sword. The helmet and the beehive are associated in various works as an emblem of the proverb, Ex Bello, Pax. As such they are to be found in several editions of the famous Emblemes of Andrea Alciati (1492-1550). Geoffrey Whitney's Choice of Emblemes (originally published in Leyden in 1586) includes an engraving of a plumed helmet with bees buzzing around it. Whitney's explanatory poem reads:

> The helmet stronge, that did the head defende,
> Behold, for hyve, the bees in quiet serv'd:
> And when that warres with bloodie bloes, had ende,
> They, hony wroughte, where soldiour was preserv'd:
> Which doth declare, that blessed fruits of peace

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[21] This phrase, of course, is the final line of the beautiful, visionary poem, 'Jerusalem', in Blake's preface to Milton.

How sweet she is, when mortall warres doe cease.[22]

The sweetness of the Peaceable Kingdom was evidently the hope and prayer of Samuel Colman, whether as the goal of his nation, the dream of his 'tribal' community as a Dissenter, expectation of one who had confidence in the justice of the commander who would be making awards to his faithful soldiers at the end of life's battle.

Earlier in this study I touched on the mood of Romantic painting - the pessimism which is usually said to have prevailed, and the less noticeable signs of hope. Generally speaking, the indications of faith which appear in the work of Romantic artists include visions of supernatural phenomena which suggest that a power higher than man may be in charge of nature and of the destiny of this world. Turner's Angel Standing in the Sun is one example. At the same time, it is clear that, like Turner, many artists of the period (along with writers) felt the need to dwell on the catastrophes which would signal the end of the world. And - more interesting - the end of the world appears to have meant to them the end of civilization, although not of Nature. It is true that John Martin's optimism extended, during phases of his career, to his production of grand schemes for the improvement of London and to paintings of the Celestial City. But, at the end of his life, when he painted his huge three-part vision of the end of the world, Martin saw civilization as utterly doomed to destruction; The Plains of Heaven (1853) are planted with flowers and cedars, and watered by sparkling streams, while the New Jerusalem is so distant and faint as to be hardly noticeable. The 'saints' who play on harps in the foreground enjoy a New Eden, not urban luxury. A somewhat similar dream of the survival of Nature, or of the renewal of Eden, is present in the paintings by Thomas Cole which are deliberate attempts on his part to instruct through works of art. His four-part series entitled The Voyage of Life (of which there are two versions, painted in 1839/40 and 1841/2) shows that while Cole viewed Childhood as beginning in a luxuriant garden, and Youth as a vision of what Cole himself called 'an air-built Castle', a grand architectural fantasy, the storms of Manhood destroyed those early, confident dreams. Finally, in Old Age, Cole's voyager looks towards the bright heavens from the dark wilderness of the world, and sees angels approaching to welcome him to 'the Haven of Immortal Life'. This haven is not described, but there is no indication that it is a city.[23]

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[22] Ronald Parkinson offers an alternative source for this beehive. He suggests (in Samuel Colman: Four Apocalyptic Themes) that the beehive is 'presumably a reference to the line from the poem by George Peele (?1538-1597), Polyhymnia, sonnet ad finem. A Farewell to Arms: "His helmet now shall make a hive for bees"'. Peele lived in Bristol for a time and there were 1798 and 1829 editions of his writings which could have come to the attention of Colman. However, the poem was originally addressed in 1590 as a hymn of allegiance to Queen Elizabeth I. The last lines read: 'Goddess, allow this aged man his right/ To be your beadsman now that was your knight'. The simple and popular emblem (from which Peele no doubt drew his beehive imagery) appears the more likely source of Colman's symbol - assuming that Colman knew an edition of Whitney, or another book containing the Ex Bello, Pax emblem.

While Thomas Cole was in London (1829-31), he was arranging his ideas for an ambitious series of paintings which he mentioned to his patron, Robert Gilmor of Baltimore, under the tentative title of 'the History of a Natural Scene, as well as an Epitome of Man'.[24] He had been mapping out the subject for several years in his notebooks, sometimes under the title of a 'Cycle of Mutation'. The title he finally chose for the pictures which were completed in 1836 for another patron, Luman Reed, was The Course of Empire.[25]

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[23] The earlier version of The Voyage of Life is in the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York, and the later set of pictures in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C. The descriptions of the paintings (from which the brief quotations above are taken) are from the account of the pictures Cole prepared, and which appeared in the catalogue of the exhibition of his work held in 1848 at the American Art-Union. See Howard S. Merritt, Thomas Cole, pp. 34-37 and the reproductions on pp. 54 (colour) and 90-93.

The subject of the development, or betterment, of civilization was a popular rival in England at the time of Cole's visit to the doomsayings of preachers such as Edward Irving and painters like John Martin. In 1831, for instance, H.P. Briggs showed at the Royal Academy The Progress of Civilization, which he had been commissioned to paint for the Mechanics' Institute, Hull. It reflected the optimistic and liberal idea that education would improve society and initiate the Millennium. But Cole, at this stage in his career certainly, was not optimistic about human progress, and fed his imagination on Turner's pictures of the saga of Carthage and on poetry (notably that of Byron) which confirmed his own feelings. Mary Shelley's novel, The Last Man (1826), and Eugene Roche's London in a Thousand Years (1830) may have provided further inspiration. Roche forecast the destruction of London and its replacement by a green and primitive landscape. Interestingly, although in Cole's 1829 notebook, in an entry just preceding his 12 December notes on Turner's gallery, he described his plans for his projected series of

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24 The letter is reproduced in the Baltimore Museum of Art's Annual II (1967), p. 72. It dates from 29 January 1832 after Cole had moved on to Florence.

25 These paintings are now in the collection of the New York Historical Society, New York City.

paintings as representing 'man and the world', not 'any particular nation or country', there is evidence to suggest that Cole's paintings represent America, and that they should be read as a 'message' to the United States.[26] It seems likely, from the eventual shaping of the series as five scenes, rather than the four indicated in early plans, that the painter was influenced by the five 'acts' described in a poem he could well have come across in England: On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America. This was written by Bishop George Berkeley (1658-1753), an idealist who believed that an Edenic state could be achieved in America through enlightened Christian government (from Britain) and through the education of the people. The stanza of the poem which is now remembered reads as follows:

> Westward the course of empire takes its way;
>   The first four acts already past,
> A fifth shall close the drama with the day:
>   Time's noblest offspring is the last.[27]

Cole's fifth painting in his own Course of Empire (the title, too, would seem to have come from Berkeley's poem) is a scene of desolation, not of nobility. He may have been deliberately creating a sad rejection of Berkeley's vision; or he may have been confirming the bishop's own fears about British imperialism, corrupted by wealth. At all events it is fascinating to see that, just about the time when Samuel Colman was using his poetic landscapes to create emblems of God's plan for salvation, and sermons about the overthrow of 'the rulers of the darkness of this world' (Ephesians 6.12) Thomas Cole was also making painted 'sermons'. Like Colman, he was a 'prophet'. However, what he evidently did not share with Colman was a concept of the 'earth made new' which encompassed Jerusalem as a community of saints. Cole's vision of salvation was a dream of the purification of the land, the renewal of the 'wilderness' of America. At a personal level (as pictured in The Voyage of Life and later paintings) the vision involved the individual human being in a passage, or pilgrimage - the kind of purifying process Bunyan would have taught him to expect to endure, and the kind of journey which fascinated the Victorians, and their American cousins, in literature as well as in the visual arts.[28] Cole's pilgrim seems to have been led to a paradise which was a recreated wild place. Colman, following his Bible more closely, appears to have envisioned a New Jerusalem which was a bigger and better version of what Isaac Watts had called, 'A little Spot inclos'd by Grace/ *Out* of the World's wide Wilderness'.[29] This is a cultivated place, to be shared with friends, a 'tribal' home. To the extent that their views of paradise differed in these ways, Colman was a much more fundamentally optimistic and evangelical 'prophet' than Cole; and, as the paintings examined in this chapter demonstrate, he celebrated repeatedly the entrance into the Holy City which he clearly hoped to take part in, with other members of the 'tribes of Israel'.

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[26] For Cole's notebook see New York State Library (Albany, NY), Thomas Cole Papers, Box 6, Folder 2.

[27] Line one of this stanza is said to have been the message of the first telegraph to cross the Missouri. My source of this information is Willa Cather, The Song of the Lark (1915).

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[28] See Barry V. Qualls, The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: the novel as a book of life (Cambridge, 1982).

[29] The lines are from Watts's 'The Church the Garden of Christ'. The italics are mine.

Colman painted his own vision of the Revelation of Paradise. This is a watercolour, The Vision of St John (Pls. 106 and 107). With its distant view of the heavenly Jerusalem, as shown to John and described in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, the painting should perhaps be seen as a happy contrast to the Psalm 137 watercolour, in which exiles weep for Jerusalem by the 'waters of Babylon'.[30]

The Vision of St John appears to derive its foreground rocky composition from John Martin, whose 'Heaven - the rivers of bliss' was published among his Paradise Lost engravings in 1827, and shows two angels on a rock in front of an idyllic landscape that includes a stretch of still water with trees growing on its verge. An even more likely source for Colman's painting would have been an 1824 engraving after Martin by G. Cooke, the 'city of inconceivable splendour'. This appeared as the frontispiece in Edwin Atherstone's A Midsummer Day's Dream. On a rocky promontory an angel directs the eyes of a tiny human figure towards the grand gates and terraces and domes of the city in the distance. Colman's nearby figures are closer to the viewer than those gazing at the 'city of inconceivable splendour'. And it is important to notice that the rocks have been transformed into a tiny islet, almost as small in relative terms as the token representations of Patmos often given in medieval Bibles. St John, who is dressed in a pink and gold robe, spreads his arms in joy and awe, as he kneels on the rock. The angel beside him, dressed in white, gestures towards the city in the distance, reflected in the 'pure river'. Mountains tower above the river and the city, indistinct but high and grand. They are given an insubstantial and radiant appearance by the pale gold light which pours from the gates of the city, across its terraces, and over the river and the cedars and cypresses and willows and other trees which grow on its banks. The painter is reminding us that 'there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light' (Revelation 22.5). Eric Adams has pointed out the similarity between the mountain landscape and Danby's views of mountain scenery in Norway.[31] Clearly the sources of the visual ideas for Colman's Vision were various; at the same time, the artist's imagination, and belief and faith, brought the ideas together and the little painting has the effect of a dream, or of a song, 'giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light' (Colossians 1.12).

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[30] Pl. 107 shows only the central area of the painting; there is a much better, complete reproduction in Andrew Wyld's catalogue of his exhibition, English Watercolours Drawings and Oil Paintings from Gainsborough to Turner (London, May 1985). Colman's Vision of St John appears as Catalogue No. 52.

John Newton (1725-1807) wrote a famous hymn about the future privileges of the 'saints':

> Glorious things of thee are spoken,
>   Zion, city of our God;
> He whose word cannot be broken
>   Formed thee for his own abode;
> On the Rock of Ages founded,
>   What can shake thy sure repose?

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[31] Letter to Margaret Whidden, 23 July 1985.

> With salvation's wall surrounded,
>   Thou mayest smile at all Thy foes.

It is pleasant to imagine Samuel Colman humming this song while painting his own vision of the 'everlasting inheritance'.

CHAPTER NINE

The Coming of the Kingdom:
Samuel Colman's Positive Vision of the End of the World and the Return of the Sovereign Christ

'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever' (Revelation 11.15). Chapter Eight presented the kingdom or inheritance which Samuel Colman envisioned in the promises of Christ to those who accepted his Covenant of Grace; Chapter Nine explores Colman's apocalyptic paintings in an attempt to understand the artist's theology of the Second Coming of Christ and of the Day of Judgement.

In one sense all of Colman's apocalyptic pictures are judgement scenes. In The Delivery of Israel the righteous are conducted to the safety of the Holy Mountain and the wicked are destroyed below, having failed to come through the trials which cleansed the faithful and which demonstrated their trust in God. Belshazzar's Feast represents the final overthrow of evil powers and the judgement of the wicked - in which, like Daniel, the saints participate. In The Coming of the Messiah judgement is expressed in a different way, for, although the mighty destroying angel on the mountain symbolizes the activity of the actual Judgement Day, the promised peace of the millennium is stressed and the remnant church portrayed in definite contrast to the forces of Antichrist and to the backsliders of whom the church must be purged before the Second Advent. The Destruction of the Temple is devoted almost entirely to the Last Judgement; so too is The Edge of Doom. Colman's preoccupation with the end of time and with the prophetic books of the Bible, combined as it was with sincere belief, does incline modern viewers to associate Colman with millenarian 'enthusiasm'. Some of his own contemporaries may have looked at the paintings and characterized the artist in the same way. However, his work as a whole demonstrates Colman to have had a normal, and even conservative interest in Romantic Landscape subjects, an involvement with the 'emblem habit' that looks remarkably like a visual equivalent of the poetry of Isaac Watts, and an early nineteenth-century Dissenter's commitment to the redress of political grievances as felt by Congregationalists. The 'respectability' of Colman's presentation of the Last Judgement can also be demonstrated. The interest in Christian eschatology in Colman's day has been mentioned several times already and its widespread hold on orthodox theologians introduced in Chapter Three; but the subject requires a more detailed presentation here.

History has played us false by giving front-page coverage to intriguing religious oddities and eccentrics like Richard Brothers, self-styled prophet and revolutionary of the 1790s, Devon prophetess Joanna Southcott (1750-1814), Jonathan Martin (incendiary of York Minster) and the remarkable, almost illiterate John Wroe, who attempted to establish a

New Jerusalem in the 1830s in Ashton-under-Lyne.[1] Unfortunately these and many other widely differing personalities are often grouped together and their teachings confused with those of much more orthodox thinkers. One is given the impression that an interest in Bible prophecy with an emphasis on the Millennium was as uncharacteristic of students and teachers of the Bible at the beginning of the nineteenth century as was the tendency to encourage their followers in speaking in tongues (which did take place in isolated sects) or to look on their leader (with chiliastic literalism) as a reincarnation of Christ. In actuality, the years from about 1780 until several decades into the next century were marked by a very widespread interest in Bible prophecy and in the study of the Millennium. 'Academic speculation about the nearness of the millennium and a spate of sermons and pamphlets on Daniel and Revelation poured forth in the 1790s', writes J.F.C. Harrison, 'and the general religious ethos of bible-centred, Protestant evangelicalism was favourable to an apocalyptic interpretation of events in Europe. All this was entirely orthodox and respectable'.[2] Harrison distinguishes between millennialists (scholars interested in study, at a fairly sophisticated level, of Bible prophecy about Christ's return to earth) and millenarians (whom he describes as 'the enthusiasts, the fanatics, the come-outers'). However, he issues a word of caution: 'The distinction between what may be called respectable, orthodox, scholarly millennialism on the one hand, and popular (or folk) millenarianism on the other is useful for analytical purposes, but the division is not hard and fast. Those who believed in the millennium had the option of combining so many variables that a millennialist or a millenarian could be placed at any point along a continuum of belief'.[3] He stresses that 'it was not so much the content of their beliefs that distinguished the millenarians as the way in which they held those beliefs and the purposes to which they were applied'.[4] Edward Irving and George Stanley Faber undoubtedly shared many convictions about prophecy. But whereas the Revd Faber remained an academic investigator, doing arithmetic exercises centred on the books of Daniel and Revelation, Irving moved from the position of scholar to that of active participant in adventist happenings, involving prophesyings, supernatural healings and the likes. He had become a millenarian.

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[1] For more information about Brothers, and about Joanna Southcott, see E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Penguin Edition, London, 1968), pp. 127-129 and 423-426. Joanna Southcott is covered in more detail in G.R. Balleine, Past Finding Out (London, 1956). For John Wroe see W.H. Armytage, Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960 (London, 1961), pp. 274-276. Joseph Cottle's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Cottle, became a mid nineteenth-century minor prophetess, after the death of her husband Robert in 1858. See Augustus de Morgan, A Budget of Paradoxes (London, 1872), pp. 313-316. There is no suggestion, however, that Elizabeth's extremely eccentric opinions were in any way shared by Joseph Cottle. Robert, too, regarded by his widow as a Messiah, was in all probability a fairly orthodox Independent, holding strongly anti-Catholic views.

[2] Harrison, The Second Coming, p. 207.

Millenarians included harmless idealists of varied backgrounds and simple country folk with a long tradition of popular visionaries to support their claims. They also included the mentally ill, and thousands of followers who were looking for leaders in periods of confusion and deprivation. Although otherwise 'normal' people, like the engraver, William Sharp, joined the ranks of Joanna Southcott, it is very unlikely that Samuel Colman was seriously interested in millenarianism. His known links, over a long period of time (and explicitly in 1833-35), are with 'respectable' mainstream Dissent. And while his beliefs need not have been exactly those of his church pastors, or of his friends or of the writers who influenced early nineteenth-century thinking, the testimony of his pictures does not contradict the idea that Colman was a Congregationalist with the generally positive outlook of an evangelical Christian.

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[3] Harrison, p. 5.

[4] Harrison, p. 208.

For a clear statement of millennialism in its two contrasting forms, J.F.C. Harrison's remarks are again useful:

> From a postmillennial position it is easy to assume that the kingdoms of this world will eventually become those of Christ, that through the endeavours of Christians the world will get better and better, until finally it is worthy to receive Christ at his second coming. In the eighteenth century millennialists increasingly came to equate this doctrine with the idea of progress. The millennium was secularized into a utopia or perfect state of society, to be attained through a gradual and steady march of improvement. Providence was integrated into the concept of natural law. In sharp contrast with this optimistic, reassuring, Augustan view, the premillennialist (or millenarian) expected no such comforting progression. Convinced that the world was evil, he looked for sudden divine intervention to destroy the existing order and establish the millennium. Such a view was out of step with the usual Enlightenment thinking on political events and historical causation . . . [and] had the air of an old-fashioned, popular ideology . . . until the revolutionary upheavals of the 1790s suddenly made it seem attractive again. 5

One of the leading premillennialists of the early years of the century was James Hatley Frere, who was passionately devoted to the study of the prophetic writings in Daniel and Revelation. His Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras and St. John (London, 1815) made a detailed attack on the theories of another writer on the subject,

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5 Harrison, pp. 6,7. In defining the terms 'millenarian' and 'millennialist', Harrison follows the distinctions made by Ernest Lee Tuveson in Redeemer Nation: the Idea of America's Millennial Role (Chicago, 1968), pp. 33 and 34.

William Cunninghame of Lainshaw, whose first and most notable publication was A Dissertation on the Seals and Trumpets of the Apocalypse (London, 1813). Polemical writing about the prophecies and the debate on the imminent return of Jesus Christ continued long after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. As noted in Chapter Six Edward Irving (strongly influenced by J.H. Frere) published his own exploration of prophecy, Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed (1826). And in the following year appeared his two-volume translation of Manuel Lacunza's Venida del Mesias en Gloria y Magestad (The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty). Irving was closely associated with Henry Drummond who organized a series of conferences on prophecy at his home, Albury Park in Surrey. The meetings took place in 1826 and the two following years, and Drummond published a book which grew out of the conferences: Dialogues on Prophecy (London, 1827-9). In 1830 the political upheavals in Europe refuelled the fires of enthusiasm and it is interesting that in just one issue, the February edition of 1831, the Eclectic Review offered criticisms of four books on millennialist topics. However, with characteristic caution, the editor suggested that his readers approach prophetic interpretation with 'that humility of mind which acquiesces in uncertainty, where evidence is unattainable, and knowledge is for the wisest reasons withheld. "It is not for us to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power."'[6]

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[6] Eclectic Review, February 1831, p. 149. For a truly ardent attack on 'Mr Irving and his co-adjutors' see the review (full of praise) given to A Protest against certain speculations in the Prophecies of Scripture; being the substance of a Sermon preached in Portland Chapel, Bath, January 30th, 1831. J.F. Whitridge was the author of the sermon and the reveiw appears on pp. 337-340 of the Bath and Bristol Magazine, or Western Miscellany, Vol. 1, 1832.

Careful 'progressive' or 'evangelical' Protestants certainly took an interest in contemporary events as possible signs of the fulfilment of prophecy, but they hesitated to view the texts of prophecy as having absolutely literal application. The Revd Robert Hall was so cautious that he considered the millennium to refer to an indefinite period, longer than a mere thousand years.[7] The Revd William Jay of Bath, an Independent minister, and an acquaintance of Mr. Hall, is reported to have 'understood the prophecies generally in a figurative and spiritual sense.'[8] Sharing this caution was Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet. He wrote a poem entitled 'Signs and Tokens' which appeared in his Devotional Verses of 1826:

Christian pilgrim, seeking still
Zion's high and holy hill,
May the Lord to thee impart
Single eye, and steadfast heart.

Place thy trust in grace divine,
Heed not, thou each changing sign;
Shouldst thou witness many a change,
Count not these as tokens strange.

Winds may rise of fearful sound,
Darkest clouds may gather round,
These may usher cloudless day,
Those but waft thee on thy way.

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[7] Greene, Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, p. 199.

[8] Greene, pp. 197, 198.

He who watcheth winds that blow,
May too long neglect to sow;
He who waits lest clouds should rain,
Harvest never shall obtain.

Signs and tokens false may prove,
Trust thou in a Saviour's love,
In his sacrifice for sin,
And his Spirit's power within.

Keep thou Zion-ward thy face,
Ask in faith the aid of grace,
Use the strength which grace shall give,
Die to self - in Christ to live.

Faith in God, if such be thine,
Shall be found thy safest sign,
And obedience to His will
Prove the best of tokens still.

John Foster of Stapleton was attracted to prophecy as a guide to the times in which he lived. 'If', he said in a lecture given in April, 1823, 'the Almighty be really going to accelerate the progress of his cause, and of human improvement - (and the thickening shocks and commotions of the moral world corresponding to the images and predictions of prophecy warrant us to hope so) - we have yet a dark and fearful prospect before us. But the consolation is that all these "overturnings" are to displace and destroy what obstructs the cause of heaven, and of human happiness'.[9] Yet Foster was no premillennialist. In November 1823 he was telling his hearers at Broadmead Chapel in Bristol:

> His kingdom shall be 'from shore to shore, and from the river to the ends of the earth.' And be it always remembered, that it is in the progressive prevalence of his religion, as the supreme cause, that alone we can look for the advancement toward the state of universal and inviolable peace. It will, in going on, assume into its service and co-operation, increasing knowledge, and all improvements in political science and institutions; but it is, itself alone, the security that these shall be fully efficient for good. The enlarged promotion of this, therefore, we have to desire and implore above all things. And while we see its advancement but slow as yet, and behold the world under a sky menacing storms and thunders, - let our faith maintain a firm assurance that the Almighty will, at length, fulfil all his promises in universal Christianity and universal Peace. 10

Foster's hopeful view of an expanded church and kingdom of Christ on earth is fully supported by the Bible commentaries in widespread use in his day. The Revd Thomas Scott (1747-1821) was one of the most important commentators on Holy Writ among Foster's contemporaries. His six-volume work was originally published between 1788 and 1792 but he revised it continuously until his death. Like Foster, Scott paid attention to the 'prophetical controversy', linking Napoleon with anti-Christian activity outlined in Revelation, Chapter 13. However, a note made in 1815 adds the rider: 'But many things seem now (1815) to be reverting to their former channel; and it is too early to judge how this revolution may terminate'.[11] At the end of volume six

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9 Lectures Delivered at Broadmead Chapel, Bristol, Second Series (London, 1847), pp. 87, 88.

10 Foster, pp. 157, 158.

11 The Holy Bible . . . with Explanatory Notes . . . by the Revd Thomas Scott (London, 1861), commentary on Revelation 13.2-4. There were many editions of Scott's Commentary.

of his commentary Scott gives a 'Retrospective View of the Predictions Contained in the Revelation of St. John'. He remarks that the language of the Revelations is 'an instance of that wise and proper obscurity which we always find in prophecies, previous to their accomplishment'. In spite of this obscurity, Revd Scott ventures to suggest that 'we may expect a thousand years will follow the final destruction of all the antichristian, idolatrous, persecuting powers; during which pure Christianity . . . will be diffused over all the earth'. After this earthly millennium, says Scott, will follow the parousia - Christ's appearance to judge the world and bring about the 'entire dissolution of the visible creation'.

A Presbyterian commentator on the Bible, the Revd John Brown of Haddington, was also regarded as a widely respected authority in the early nineteenth century. Brown considered that the restoration of the True Church to a 'peaceable and glorious state' after the reign of anti-Christ was what was meant by the millennium. 'The glory and happiness of this thousand years' reign of the saints is understood, not literally, but spiritually and figuratively . . . as it is a figure and pledge of the general resurrection of the saints to eternal life at the last day'.[12]

If Samuel Colman was a mainstream Congregationalist, an inheritor of modified principles of 'Old Dissent', his set of beliefs could have been headed by hope in the establishment of the millennium on earth. Christ's power would accomplish this glorious state, working through the agency of human forces, secular and religious. (Secular optimists were braced by the expectation of social and political improvement brought about by rational government.) The setting up of Christ's kingdom appears to be the subject of a number of Colman's paintings. If the process of bringing into being Christ's reign on earth sometimes appears to be cataclysmic, as in The Coming of the Messiah, rather than benign (as befitting the spread of a world mission) one may interpret the imagery to mean that Colman accepted, with Foster and others, the inevitability of 'overturnings' before the time of peace. He could have had in mind a clash between Papal and Protestant powers or wars between Christian forces and atheistic tyrants.[13]

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[12] The Self-Interpreting Bible (Bungay, 1813), Commentary on Revelation 20.2-7.

In the eighteenth century, and in the nineteenth century too, among culturally optimistic Christians, the 'General Judgement' (that is, judgement of mankind collectively) was played down, and the doctrine of a 'Particular Judgement' was emphasized in orthodox theology. That is to say, the Last Judgement as a grand and dreadful Assize was not nearly so urgent in the mind of the average believer as the need to be ready to stand before Christ on the day of one's death, which was a 'particular' or personal Day of Judgement. J.P. Martin says that the rationalism of the late seventeenth century and of the eighteenth century led to the virtual rejection of eschatology - not absolutely or 'frontally', but in such terms as to make the Last Judgement 'superfluous'.[14] For the Last Judgement was substituted the hope (and threat) of life to follow immediately after death. Geoffrey Rowell comments that the

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13 In 1799 Henry Kett suggested that the beast of Revelation 13 was to be identified with infidelity and Jacobinism. See Kett's History the Interpreter of Prophecy (Oxford, 1799).

14 J.P. Martin, The Last Judgment in Protestant Theology from Orthodoxy to Ritschl, (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 87.

Judgement came to be seen as 'a condemnation of the ungodly' while the righteous Christian expected 'a direct linking of the bliss of heaven with the moment of death . . . arguments based on the immortality of the soul were more frequently employed as an ethical sanction than those based on the Last Judgement'.[15] However, in at least one of his pictures, Samuel Colman appears to have been presenting a vision of a severe and sudden end of the world, and the sinners of that world, a vision which does not harmonize easily with the doctrines of an individual day of reckoning or of a postmillennial return of Christ.

The Destruction of the Temple is recognizable as an explicit representation of the Day of Judgement as foretold by Christ in Matthew, Chapter 24. The 'sign of the Son of man' (verse 30) can be identified in the luminous cross in the sky, and the angels gather 'his elect from the four winds' (verse 31) while, at the same time 'all the tribes of the earth mourn' (verse 30). Colman pictures the overthrow of Roman Catholicism taking place on this day - an achievement which Foster and Scott obviously considered as happening a thousand years before Christ's Second Coming.

One possible solution to this puzzle is that Colman was using the Last Judgement imagery metaphorically. His authority for doing so might have come from Isaac Watts; there was an 1817 edition of Watts's The World to Come; or Discourses on the Joys and Sorrows of Departed Souls at Death, and the Glory or Terror of the Resurrection. Commenting on Revelation 10.5,6 (on the angel's pronouncement that there should be 'time no longer'), Watts writes at the beginning of

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[15] Geoffrey Rowell, Hell and the Victorians (Oxford, 1974), p. 28.

Discourse One: 'What special age or period of time, in this world, the prophecy refers to, may not be so easy to determine; but this is certain, that it may be happily applied to the period of every man's life . . . We shall be swept off the stage of this visible state into an unseen and eternal world: eternity comes upon us at once, and all that we enjoy, all that we do, and all that we suffer in time, shall be no longer'. If Colman took this view, then it can be argued that the scene which appears to represent one Day of Judgement really uses the vivid imagery of the Gospel to describe the horrible fate, at the time of their individual deaths, of bishops and inquisitors and 'foolish virgins' and the jubilant translation of the just - many events in time, not one.

Alternatively, Colman may have been concentrating on a single-event Last Judgement, and envisioning the resurrection, at the end of a thousand years of millennial glory on earth, of the saintly dead of times past, and the summons to punishment of the wicked of every era, from those who crucified Christ and those who persecuted his followers in later centuries to evil forces of modern times. For, even when theologians tended to ignore the Last Judgement, it did not disappear from the pages of the catechisms, far less from the Bible itself. Various Protestant catechisms were in use in Colman's day, and from any one of these he would have received assurance that there would be a Judgement, although the relationship of this event to the Millennium would not have been made clear.

The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order (which was the modification of the Westminster Confession adopted by Independents in 1658) is straightforward about the meaning of the Judgement Day:

> God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ . . . In which day . . . all persons who have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words and deeds . . . As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a judgment, both to deter all men from sin and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity; so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful. 16

An 1802 edition of The Shorter Catechism makes a clear distinction between death and the Last Judgement: 'The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection'. At the resurrection, 'believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity'.[17]

Joseph Cottle also emphasized the difference between the day of a person's death and the day of his judgement:

> The Bodies of the Saints will then [at the Second Coming] be raised up, and, by the power of Omnipotence, be transformed into a resemblance to the glorious Body of their Divine Lord. The Angels accompany the Judge of the whole earth; and the Saints (that is, the Souls of the Saints) are not raised, but come; advancing to join their long-forgotten, and now glorified Bodies, in the confluence of happy and immortal Spirits. 18

Isaac Watts, for all his emphasis on the importance of the day of death, states that 'the saints of God who are resting in their beds of dust will arise joyfully at the call of their heavenly Father . . . the

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16 The quotation is from p. 42 of the 1971 edition of The Savoy Declaration, published in London by the Evangelical Press.

17 The Shorter Catechism of the Reverend Assembly of Divines (Edinburgh, 1802), pp. 14 and 15.

18 Essays in Reference to Socinianism (London, 1842), p. 63.

spirits of the just made perfect wait in patience for the great and blessed rising-day which God has appointed, and for the illustrious change of their bodies from corruption and darkness to light, and life, and glory'.[19] These sentiments are confirmed in Watts's hymn, 'A Happy Resurrection':

> Let worms devour my wasting flesh,
> And crumble all my bones to dust;
> My God shall raise my frame anew
> At the revival of the just.[20]

Going still further back, among theologians, to Calvin himself, one finds that although he gives a prominent place in his philosophy of Last Things to the death of the individual human being, he does not deny the reality of the Last Judgement. 'Although the immortality of the soul is so important for Calvin', writes Heinrich Quistorp, 'he insists, consonantly with the Bible and the confession of Christendom, on placing the resurrection of the dead in the centre of Christian hope. The article about the resurrection of the flesh is for him no mere appendix of Christian doctrine but the culmination to which all proceeds . . . The general resurrection forms the conclusion of the work of Christ . . . on His second coming'.[21]

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[19] The World to Come (1817 edition), p. 284 and p. 287.

[20] Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Book II, Hymn CII, verse 2 (1785 edition, published in Coventry).

[21] Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things (London, 1955), p. 108. Quistorp is referring to the 1539 edition of Calvin's Institutio, Book III.

To this point the thesis of this chapter has been that the Last Judgement themes tackled by Colman in a number of his paintings, and particularly markedly in The Destruction of the Temple, need not force us to conclude that he was other than a believer in the postmillennial return of Christ. I have shown that, among Colman's contemporaries, the conventional acceptance of the Judgement varied, ranging from a definite emphasis on death as the Last Judgement, to an expectation that Christ would come after the Millennium, to call the saints to heaven and to condemn the wicked. Incidentally, there were differing opinions about the meaning of eternal damnation. Some theologians considered that Christ would completely destroy the wicked when he came, while others thought that an immortal soul could not be destroyed, but must suffer eternally. Joseph Cottle preferred the latter view, arguing that by the denial of the reality of eternal punishment 'the solemn event, the Grand Day of Account, which is to determine the Everlasting Destinies of Man is frittered away by these Despisers of our Common Faith [Unitarians] who can extinguish Hell with a Trope, and confute Heaven with a Syllogism!'[22] About the exact nature of the Millennium, there was also disagreement; and among many people there was probably a readiness to take the advice of the Eclectic Review and 'acquiesce in uncertainty'. On the other hand, as I have also shown, there was a widespread interest in the study of Bible prophecy, so that the discovery that someone - minister or layman - took an interest in the mysterious chronologies presented in Daniel and in Revelation, and interpreted them to foretell a premillennial Second Advent of Christ, does not automatically mean that that person was an oddity.

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[22] Essays in Reference to Socinianism, p. 114.

In his funeral sermon, following the death of William Thorp, Dr Joseph Fletcher remarked that at the age of fifteen Thorp had experienced a vivid dream about the Judgement day, a dream which he often talked about with awe much later in life.[23] Interest in the Judgement developed to such an extent for the Revd Thorp that he joined the numbers of those who studied the dates presented in the Prophecies, comparing Faber's system of interpretation with Sir Isaac Newton's or with Irving's and those of other students of the topic.[24] Fletcher noted (pages 26 and 27 of the funeral sermon), 'Whatever might be the peculiarities of his theology . . . they were the result of deep thinking and matured conviction . . . Those views of interpretation which he deliberately adopted were such as tended to impart a rich savour of evangelical unction to his ministry - so that Christ Jesus was indeed the Alpha and Omega of his ministration . . . Whatever might have been his convictions on points of prophetic interpretation, on which he agreed with Mede, and Gill, and Newton, - he had no sympathy with the displays of intolerance and the pretensions of fanaticism'. The Destinies of the British Empire shows William Thorp to have been a cautious premillennialist. And since, over a number of years, he was evidently Samuel Colman's spiritual mentor at Castle Green Meeting, it will be worthwhile to consider his views on the Last Judgement and then to re-examine Colman's apocalyptic paintings, keeping Thorp's opinions in mind.

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[23] The Funeral Sermon on the Death of the Rev. W. Thorp (London, 1833), p. 23.

[24] Thorp returns repeatedly to prophetic symbols and prophetic time in The Destinies of the British Empire. Pages xiv and ix introduce his 'authorities'.

On pages 40 and 41 of his book, Thorp analyses the vision recorded by Daniel in Chapter Seven of that prophecy - the vision of the 'Ancient of days', robed in a garment 'white as snow', as described in verse 9, and seated on a fiery throne, in front of which stood 'ten thousand times ten thousand', because 'the judgment was set, and the books were opened' (verse 10). 'Did the language of inspiration itself ever rise to higher sublimity?', asks Thorp. He agrees that this vision represents the Day of Judgement, but he also states that 'the day of judgment is not a day composed of four-and-twenty hours'. What he believes is that 'the day of a man's death is, to him, the day of judgment'. However, 'nations, as well as men, lie under one common doom; and the judge of all the earth holds assizes over particular nations at different periods of the world's duration'. There have been separate days of judgement for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Babylon, Nineveh, Jerusalem and Rome, according to Revd Thorp. He sums up his theory about the Judgement on page 42:

> The judgment of God, in fact is a series of judicial inflictions, beginning with the deluge, and going on to the commencement of the millennium; then commencing a new series, and terminating at the close of the millennium in the wonders of that day, when all the dead, both small and great, shall stand before God. The judgment described in this passage, with such awful and tremendous majesty, is that which will be executed at the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the appearing of his kingdom.

Earlier in the book (on page viii of the Preface) Thorp refers to 'the visible appearance of the Messiah', the 'resurrection which shall precede the millennium' and 'the destruction of the hostile powers, confederate against the camp of the beloved city'. Here he is obviously looking at Chapter Twenty of Revelation, which describes a 'first resurrection' and a second raising of the dead, at the beginning and at the end of Christ's thousand-year reign, and a final battle between those nations deceived by Satan and the saints in the New Jerusalem. Thorp's acknowledgement of two resurrections, at the opening and at the close of the millennium, is of some importance, since the general consensus about the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgement, among mainstream commentators such as Henry and Brown and Scott, was that these events would take place simultaneously. They made no distinction between the first and second resurrections in literal terms, although they did suggest that the first resurrection might be taken as a prefiguration of the second. John Brown indicates that the restoration of the church to a 'peaceable and glorious state' at the downfall of Anti-Christ will be the first resurrection, and will be 'a figure and pledge of the general resurrection of saints to eternal life at the last day'. Scott calls the first resurrection 'a spiritual and mystical resurrection', and Matthew Henry indicates that the raising to glory of those who have died in the past for their beliefs will be carried out figuratively when the free church triumphs over political restraints.

In line with Thorp's belief in the prophecy of Revelation 20 is his preoccupation with the prophetic time-periods given in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Although he freely admits that 'no man knoweth the day, or the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh', he does insist that 'by comparing the signs of the times with the numerical prophecies, we may know, with certainty, when the awful and glorious day of the Lord is rapidly advancing upon us' (p. 142). He argues that, since Daniel was told that his prophecy was to be sealed 'till the time of the end, when the book was to be opened' and that at that time 'many were to run to and fro, and prophetical knowledge was to be increased', the 'period here foretold, is that in which we are now living' (p. 143). He goes on to list and elaborate on a number of 'signs of the times', involving the international political situation and the 'torpor of the church' in regard to the warnings of the Bible prophets. Paraphrasing Luke 18, verse 8, Thorp asks, 'When the Son of Man cometh . . . will he find faith in the earth?' (p. 147). And he fears that, true to prophecy, many of his contemporaries will forfeit eternal inheritance because they are 'willingly ignorant of the tremendous catastrophe' to come, 'laughing at the doctrine of the Lord's second advent' (p. 146).

With William Thorp's approach to Bible prophecy applied as a 'commentary', Colman's picture of The Destruction of the Temple (Pl. 89) can be seen as a focused vision of a premillennial Second Coming of Christ, as foretold in Matthew 24.30,31, Revelation 19.20 and 20.4, and Revelation 1.7.

Colman's setting for the Second Advent is the Temple in Jerusalem, presented as a Gothic building of a style he knew from experience. Revd Thorp points out on page xi of The Destinies of the British Empire, that the Bible tells us about 'the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, as though they were the same event' (in Matthew, Chapter 24). Only 'by marking what parts of the prediction were accomplished in the overthrow of the Jewish state and nation, we know with certainty what remains to be accomplished when he shall appear in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory'. Thorp's book (page 43) would have reminded Colman, if he needed reminding, that the story of the wise and foolish virgins was a parable about the Second Coming. The virgins, wise and foolish, can be seen at the right in the painting. Thorp also reminds his readers (page 154) that Christ predicted licentiousness 'as in the days of Noe' (Matthew 24.38) just before the 'coming of the son of man'. This reference too is made by Colman in the elaborate feast-table to the right of centre in The Destruction of the Temple, at which people in nineteenth-century costumes can be seen flirting, presumably wasting time.

I have already described, in Chapter Six, how Colman also includes, in the foreground of the picture, the soldiers who crucified Christ, and Judas who betrayed him, along with Pilate, washing his hands of the distasteful responsibility of dealing with the situation. This group represents those 'which pierced him', for Revelation 1.7 claims that they will be among those who will see the Second Coming.

In Chapter Six I also drew attention to the distant but vividly realized destruction of a Roman Catholic altarpiece, and the overthrow of a bishop or archbishop and his supporters, presumably doing battle with forces Colman regarded as being on the side of Christ. The appropriate text seems to be Revelation 19.20: 'And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone'. Thorp (on page 43 of his book) points to this event as a 'judicial infliction' to take place just before the millennium, and interprets the 'false prophet' as 'another emblem of popery, or of popery conjoined with infidelity'.

One of the most convincing suggestions in Colman's painting that he, like Thorp, was a careful student of Revelation, is the inscription on a large book towards the right in the central section of the scene, identifying the volume as a 'Book of Martyrs' (although the complete title is not visible). This inscription, and the wispy figures rising from their graves and sailing heavenward, imply that the artist was thinking of Revelation 20.4, part of which refers to 'the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years'. Verse 5 goes on to say that 'the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.'

Finally, the man (to the right of the foreground soldiers) who is kneeling in close examination of a scroll marked 'Prophecies', is undoubtedly a sign that Colman gave some attention to the 'prophetical controversy', at the very least.

Looking at the picture in Chapter Six as a denunciation of Roman Catholicism, I stressed its emphasis (or rather, Colman's emphasis through the painting) of the kingship of Jesus, which must, at the end of time, win the battle against all other authority, temporal or ecclesiastical. In the kneeling king, at the left of the foreground group, there is the hint that Colman shared Thorp's prayer for national repentance, as given on page 220 of the book:

> If Britain should be brought to bow to the sceptre of the King of kings and Lord of lords, she may then survive the general overthrow, and, though her chastisements may be severe, she may yet be honoured as the grand instrument in the hands of providence, to accomplish the purposes of eternal love and mercy to a guilty world.

Doubting the likelihood of Britain's being 'brought low', Thorp returns again and again to the brighter prospect of personal salvation for believers. His essentially evangelical position, which he shared with other Protestant theologians, and also with Samuel Colman, is stated on page 164 of his treatise:

> Our own eternal destiny, which is to each of us, as individuals, immensely more important than the destinies of all the empires in the world, demands our awakened, and most serious attention. The kingdom of the Messiah is the kingdom of immortal souls, ransomed from eternal death by its great founder; and placed by the side of this kingdom . . . the magnificent empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, at once the terror and admiration of the world, are but as the chaff of the summer thrashing-floors, which the wind carrieth away . . . If we are to judge of the magnitude of an object from the means made to secure it, and the price paid for it, by a wise intelligence, man must be of more importance than a world; for the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, would not die to create a world; a word was sufficient - he spake and it was done: nor to preserve it, for it must be destroyed; but he died to redeem man.

The premillennialist theology of William Thorp has been given detailed coverage in this chapter because the possibility of Colman's having had a close sympathy with Thorp's eschatology helps to explain the obvious urgency of Colman's visionary pictures. And, certainly in the case of The Destruction of the Temple, the details seem to be those given emphasis by Thorp in his book. The idea of Colman as a premillennialist is also one which adds to the stature of the man; he takes on the dimension of a person who could participate in the orthodox Independent criticism of the State, prompted by grievances felt as a Dissenter, or (on behalf of others) as a humanitarian, and yet go counter to orthodoxy in his views on the Bible prophecies.

At the same time, one must keep in mind just how little documentary material there is to support any theory about the painter's religious outlook. The picture of the artist-visionary has to be balanced by awareness that very similar vivid imagery might have been used by either a premillennialist or a postmillennialist. E.P. Thompson points to the dangers of confusing 'pure "freaks" and fanatical aberrations with the imagery - of Babylon and the Egyptian exile and the Celestial City and the contest with Satan - in which minority groups have articulated their experience and projected their aspirations for hundreds of years'.[25]

Plate 120 shows a modern painting which it may be helpful to look at briefly as an illustration of traditional imagery which can be very easily misinterpreted. The original is an acrylic painting by the American artist, Greg Constantine (whose drawing, Lisa and Leo at Poolside, I used in Chapter Six as an example of a topos at work in twentieth century art). The painting mimics the appearance of a large television screen, complete with dots, so the face of Jesus, almost full-frame, staring out of the picture, is disturbing. Some people might look on it as a joke, a trick played on God. A bad joke is how others might look on it. But the artist, who is a practising Seventh-day Adventist Christian, sees his painting (which is one of a series of TV images he completed in the mid 1970s) as part of an exploration of the meaning of illusion and reality. 'I did the painting "And Every Eye Shall See Him", he says, 'because it seemed that now it fitted into my series . . . the least it accomplishes is that it sharpens one's awareness of Christ's second coming because it helps us to think of it in a new way'.[26] By the same token, Samuel Colman's cataclysmic visions, which may look sensationalistic to some people, are worth exploring, especially in the context of the artist's denominational associations. These pictures can then be seen as signals of the individuality which could apparently flourish quietly in Congregationalism in the 1830s, and of the depth of theological probing which was going on, among laymen.

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[25] The Making of the English Working Class, p. 54.

[26] 'A Look at Adventist Artists Today', Insight, 27 February 1979, p. 25.

Returning, for the moment to the matter of the imagery common to the presentation of one exegesis of scripture or another, in the early nineteenth century, it may be illuminating to look at several of the hymns which Congregationalists (most of them postmillennialists) were in the habit of singing. The lines of these hymns tingle with the extravagant phraseology often used in connection with the Judgement; they are perhaps useful to keep in mind when looking, not only at The Destruction of the Temple, but at Colman's other Judgement paintings.

The Congregational Hymn Book, which was edited and introduced by Josiah Conder and published by the Congregational Union in 1836, includes a number of Second Advent hymns. Number 368 is Bishop Heber's hymn, of which the first and fifth verses run as follows:

The Lord shall come! the earth shall quake;
  The mountains to their centre shake;
And, withering from the vault of night,
  The stars shall pale their feeble light.

While sinners in despair shall call,
  'Rocks, hide us; mountains on us fall!'
The saints, ascending from the tomb,
  Shall joyful sing, 'The Lord is come!'

Number 370 in the same collection is the well-known eighteenth-century hymn, 'Lo, He comes with clouds descending' (the work of Thomas

Olivers, and, in its later versions, of various other writers, including Charles Wesley). Verse two applies directly to The Destruction of the Temple:

Every eye shall then behold Him,
  Robed in dreadful majesty,
Those who set at naught and sold Him
  Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
    Deeply wailing,
    Deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.

Verse four re-states the two-fold purpose of the Judgement:

Yes, amen! let all adore Thee,
  High on Thine eternal throne.
Saviour! take the power and glory;
  Make Thy righteous sentence known.
    Oh, come quickly,
    Oh, come quickly,
Claim the kingdom for Thine own.

Congregationalists inherited a long tradition of standing in awe before a God who was not only loving and gentle, but, like any good shepherd, capable of dealing out vengeance on the enemies of his flock. In the eighteenth century Jonathan Edwards was not the only minister to warn his congregations about the fate of 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God'. Closer to home, from Colman's point of view, would have been the words of caution in the writings of Isaac Watts. A gentle invalid himself, Watts seems to have been powerfully impressed by the energy of God and the paradox of his anger:

Adore and tremble, for our God
  Is a Consuming Fire.
His jealous eyes his wrath inflame
  And raise his vengeance higher.

Thro' the wide air the weighty rocks
  Are swift as hail-stones hurl'd:
Who does engage his fiery rage,
  That shakes the solid world?

Yet, mighty God! thy sovereign grace
  Sits regent on the throne;
The refuge of thy chosen race
  When wrath comes rushing down.

Thy hand shall on rebellious kings
  A fiery tempest pour,
While we beneath thy shelt'ring wings
  Thy just revenge adore.[27]

Most twentieth-century Christians are reared in an atmosphere of liberalism which tends to make light of doctrinal differences between one denomination and another, and to stress above his other qualities

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[27] Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Book I, Hymn 42, verses 1, 5, 6 and 7. Joseph Cottle, in his Hymns and Sacred Lyrics (London, 1828), Hymn 13, also published his own verses on the theme of God the Consuming Fire.

Christ's love, his 'shelt'ring wings'. So Watts's hymn may come as rather a shock, may even seem quite offensive in its apparently self-righteous exultation over sinners. And, since the words of the hymn can be so easily applied to The Destruction of the Temple, with its overt condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church, Samuel Colman stands to be condemned too as a bigot, a Puritan with a bloodthirsty lust to avenge the martyrs who died for Protestant convictions. Without examining the justice of this verdict on Independency and its Calvinist inheritance, it may be pointed out, however, that Watts's most serious intention, and very probably Samuel Colman's primary motive, was to make the clearest possible distinction between the ugliness and weight of sin and guilt and the lightness, the transparency of grace and truth - the glory belonging to Christ. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can stand in the way of this shining and majestic Christ and the establishment of his kingdom, says Isaac Watts. And the same confidence is paramount in Colman's paintings. In The Destruction of the Temple the 'shelt'ring wings' of Christ's grace extend from the serene centre of the band of cloud in the sky. His Church stands secure while the grand edifice of a pretentious and perverted organization is exploded by his light. And symbols of false teachings (noticeably the painting of the Immaculate Conception) fall into the fire that will cleanse the earth and leave behind nothing but true doctrine and an eternal bond between God and his Chosen People:

> For I am persuaded that, neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8. 38,39).

The rest of this chapter will provide analyses of Colman's other apocalyptic pictures, taken in the order in which the Bible presents the events pictured. (The Destruction of the Temple has been taken out of this context because it is a useful indicator of the artist's possible premillennialist belief.) Several of the analyses will be very short, others longer, but the aim will be to demonstrate how wide-ranging Colman was in his observation of other artists' interpretations of the same subjects, and how profoundly he seems to have felt the sovereignty of Christ.

One of the favourite metaphors of the Last Judgement, for artists of the Romantic period, was the Deluge.[28] Samuel Colman's version (his only version known at present) is a watercolour (Pl. 145). This appears, from its demonstrable connections with Turner's essays on the subject, to have been carried out very late in Colman's life. If so, it is an affirmation of the painter's lasting faith in the saving power of God, and the light of his redemption. However, I have chosen to examine it here, rather than at the very end of the chapter, because a Colman chronology seems less important or interesting (or even possible) than an overview of the painter's handling of judgement themes from the Bible, taken in their biblical sequence.

One's first impression of Colman's Deluge is of the confusion illustrated in it. The selected text must have been Genesis 7.11 which describes the beginning of the Flood, when 'all the fountains of the great deep' were 'broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened'. The picture shows jets of water rising like fountains from the sea and a great weight of water descending on the headland in the middle distance. The rocks crack and fall apart under this assault, tearing down leafy branches of trees.

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[28] See Mordecai Omer, 'The Iconology of the Deluge in English Romantic Art: with Special Reference to William Blake and J.M.W. Turner' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1976).

On the other hand, it is also obvious from the painting that it is a compositional descendant of Poussin's late Deluge (Pl. 147), a biblical interpretation of Winter, in a set of paintings of the Seasons, dating from the early 1660s (Louvre). From Poussin derives the enclosure of the foreground activity in a bay, with the ark visible on the horizon, through the opening in the rocks. Also from Poussin comes Colman's general positioning of the rocks and the suggestions of lower bars of land, stretching out into the flood waters. Even the great spur of rock, pointing out and up from the land at the right, into the middle of the sky, may have been suggested to Colman by the shape of the flashes of lightning in Poussin's painting. There were engravings of the Poussin in Bibles Colman could have known, and of course it is not inconceivable that he could have gone to Paris to look at the picture at first hand.[29]

Another very likely influence is Turner's Deluge. Plate 148 shows the 1828 mezzotint by J.P. Quilley after Turner's painting.[30] Turner had admired Poussin's painting of the Flood when he visited the Louvre in 1802, and his own version of the drama owes a considerable debt to Poussin. The wreckage in the centre of the picture, for instance, is probably inspired by the boat in Poussin's painting, which capsizes at

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29 Isaac Taylor's engraving of Poussin's Deluge appears in Hewlett's Bible, published in London between 1811 and 1812. The engraving itself is inscribed as having been issued by Phillips in 1809.

30 For a discussion of the painting, which was probably exhibited as early as 1805, see Wilton, Turner and the Sublime, pp. 137 and 139.

the central waterfall created by the cataclysm. Colman appears to have found the general idea for his foreground group of figures in Turner's assembly of miserable human beings. The large urn or cask, close to the lyre, in Colman's Deluge is a specific reminder of the elaborate urn on the right, in Turner's version of the event. The wooden beams - wreckage of a shelter or of a boat - are also similar to Turner's broken 'boat'. Turner, however, does not illustrate, as Colman does, the desperate attempts being made by many of the flood victims to escape by clambering up the rocks. Colman shows us a man trying to haul to safety by means of a rope, a baby which is being passed to him by a woman standing on a ledge not far from the wrecked boat. This detail must surely have been suggested to Colman by Poussin's more intimate group, at the right in his painting, the woman in the boat handing a child to a man almost immediately above her on a jagged chunk of rock.

Curiously, the detail of the rope and its use in salvaging valuables which are being threatened by the sea, appears again in another Colman watercolour, of The Wreckers (Pl. 149). This is evidently a real scene, or intended to look like a real scene, in which smugglers or wreckers haul cargo to safety, winching it up the side of a high cliff and carrying it away across a headland swept by enormous waves and driving rain. The boat in the foreground breaks apart and in the shallow water lies a drowned voyager with his top hat near him in the surf. The design of the painting is similar to that of The Deluge, and reminds one that Turner was also fascinated by modern-day coastal storms and destruction, as well as by the Bible account of the great Flood. There were engravings of several impressive Turner storms available in the 1830s, and one, or several, of these may have helped to interest Colman in attempting his own versions, of both contemporary and biblical disasters.[31]

The question of Colman's 'references' for his Deluge does not stop with Turner's 1828 mezzotint. The print of John Martin's 1826 Deluge appeared in 1828 (Pl. 151). The frenzied action of the figures, and the minute scale of many of them, could have impressed Colman. Even closer in feeling to Colman's picture is a sketch in oil (Pl. 152) which has been attributed to Francis Danby, since it has a compositional, though not stylistic, closeness to Danby's Sixth Seal. In this painting animals and swarms of tiny humans cling to the high rock ledges. These small figures, almost indistinguishable from the turmoil of Nature, and the giant boulders and roots or branches nearby, are recalled by the huge rocks and trees and struggling, insect-size people in Colman's watercolour.

Danby's large Deluge of 1837-40, now in the Tate Gallery (Pl. 153) was obviously not an important model for Colman, although the picture was exhibited in London in 1840. The 'lineage' of Danby's painting includes a close relationship to Géricault's Raft of the Medusa, and only a distant link with Poussin's Deluge, although Danby knew the Poussin very well. The following year, however, Danby showed at the Academy the stormy coastal scene known as Liensford Lake in Norway (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum).[32] The rock formations in Colman's Deluge suggest that he may have been influenced by Danby's picture, with its strongly tilting promontory and wide ledges, similar to those on which Colman's flood-victims are standing, calling for help from people above.

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[31] For reproductions and discussion of these, see Wilton, pp. 145-153.

[32] See Adams, Francis Danby, p. 179, Cat. No. 48, with a reproduction, Pl. 67.

Meanwhile, in 1840, John Martin's companion paintings to his 1826 Deluge were shown at the Royal Academy: The Eve of the Deluge and The Assuaging of the Waters.[33] Again, as with Danby's Deluge, these two paintings are not at all similar to Colman's in arrangement or in feeling, apart from the fact that in The Assuaging of the Waters Martin deliberately drew attention to the apocalyptic extinguishing of evil, as his own words, in the pamphlet he issued, explain: 'In the distance is the Ark in the full flood of sunlight . . . A serpent, the first tempter to sin, and therefore the original cause of the Deluge, is circled, drowned, round the branch upon which is the raven sent by Noah'.[34]

Turner's late twin essays on the Flood were displayed at the Academy in 1843: Shade and Darkness - The Evening of the Deluge (Pl. 154), and Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - The Morning after the Deluge - Moses Writing the Book of Genesis. The positive message implied by the two contrasting titles is not delivered fully in the mysterious paintings, or in the quotations from Turner's Fallacies of Hope, which were printed in the R.A. Catalogue. Nevertheless, Colman is likely to have been interested in Turner's concentration on the sun and on the meaning of light. It is also feasible that Colman borrowed for his own watercolour two visual ideas to which Turner gave prominence in Shade and Darkness: the foreground animals, and the flock of birds. Turner's poem says that 'the roused birds forsook their nightly shelters screaming', and these birds can be seen high up in the centre of his painting. Colman seems to have followed his example, by showing a number of birds fluttering away from the rocks which would once have sheltered them. In the foreground, in the figure group which otherwise resembles the similarly placed cluster of people in Turner's earlier Deluge, can be seen several animals, among them a mighty snake, and a lion which may be related to the lion in Danby's 1840 painting. But the prominent horse suggests that Colman had been looking at Turner's Shade and Darkness.

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[33] See Johnstone, John Martin, pp. 72-77.

[34] See Johnstone, p. 75.

The most important symbolic feature of the watercolour is the beam of strong yellow light which Colman has placed like a protective pillar of fire between the ark and the turmoil going on in the foreground. This scene is not the 'Assuaging of the Waters', but the terrifying period when the waters were rising and hope of survival fading for everyone on earth except those in the ark. So Colman appears to have been insisting that his viewers remember both the anger and the mercy of God and asking them to choose between destruction by the one or salvation by the other, since both are available simultaneously. Certainly, unlike Martin or Turner, Colman presents the saving beam of God's sunlight as sovereign, even in horrible situations such as the one shown in the painting. The vision of God given in this picture is that of 'the Lord God' who is 'a sun and shield', who will 'give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly' (Psalm 84.11).

Of course, the Deluge would also have been looked on by Colman as a type of Baptism, a cleansing of the earth, a purging - and the first of a number of awful forerunners of the final apocalyptic ridding of the earth of all uncleanness. The delivery of the Israelites from their Egyptian pursuers at the Red Sea was a more localized purge carried out by an angry God, and another sign to his followers from a God of mercy.

Like his Deluge, Samuel Colman's Delivery of Israel has a seemingly intricate association with the work of his fellow Romantics, and also an equally firm emphasis on the power of God, demonstrated by the light that symbolizes his presence.

When about 1792, Benjamin West painted Pharaoh and His Host Lost in the Red Sea (Pl. 47) he focused the action on Moses, in close conflict with the enemy Egyptians. Nancy Pressly has aptly described Moses as a 'pinwheel of motion, his heroic presence dominating the scene as he dramatically fulfils his role as the sublime agent of divine vengeance'.[35] Francis Danby's The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt (1825), which is illustrated in Plate 43, emphasizes the vastness of the sea, and the foreground security of the Israelites, contrasted with the annihilation of the hostile army in the water beyond them. The composition is horizontally arranged, with the supernatural beam of God's protecting fire shown at the right. John Martin, possibly following Danby's lead, produced several illustrations of the same subject also horizontal in format. One of them, the watercolour, The Destruction of Pharaoh's Hosts (1830), is shown in Plate 46. As in Danby's interpretation of the event, the Hebrew flock has been saved, and from its vantage point, we look out across the Red Sea as Moses stands in heroic pose at the edge of the water.

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[35] Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey (San Antonio, Texas, 1983), p. 42.

We know from his newspaper advertisement (reproduced in Chapter One) that Colman had finished his painting of The Delivery of Israel by the late summer of 1830. Therefore it is possible that Danby's version of the same subject (either the original or G.H. Phillips's 1829 mezzotint) had prompted Colman to tackle the theme. However, the format and the mood of Colman's painting are very different from Danby's - and from the Martin watercolours. On the other hand, Colman's painting does appear to reflect, in several details, various passages in the work of both Danby and Martin. The central, volcano-like brightness in Danby's Sixth Seal (R.A., 1828) and its foreground figures, reaching upwards, may have had a part to play in influencing Colman's concentration on a central light and on placing the doomed Egyptians in the lower part of the picture space. Then again, the stockade-like rocks which protect the plains behind Moses in Colman's Delivery of Israel suggest that he could have known Danby's little watercolour, thought to represent Llynydwal, North Wales (Pl. 44) and to date from about 1827.[36] Again, some of the fallen warriors in Colman's painting resemble Danby's so-called Climber of Helvellyn (1825-29), a Danby composition known now only through the engraving by J. Romney (Pl. 45). It is quite possible that both the rock shapes and the pose of the warriors were transmitted to Colman from some other source, perhaps one he shared with Danby. A possible liking for John Martin's Joshua on Colman's part has already been mentioned. A watercolour study by Martin - possibly a sketch for his Bible illustration, appears in Plate 48. The gigantic sunbeam, which opens the sky as if it were a set of stage curtains, would certainly have impressed Colman if he did have a chance to see it. (An anonymous etching, after Martin, was published in 1827, in Stories from the Scriptures, by the Revd J. Bourne Hall Draper.) Here again, the similarities between Colman's light-dominated battlefield and Martin's may be recognized as purely a matter of a common source.

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[36] See Adams, p. 190, Cat. No. 127.

There is also an interesting similarity between the shape of the light-bathed, distant rocks, towering over Moses, in William West's The Israelites Passing through the Wilderness preceded by the Pillar of Light (first exhibited 1845, Pl. 49) and the dark rocks, formed like an enormous head and shoulders, on which Moses stands in Colman's picture. But whereas West's scientific interests encouraged him to give careful attention to the details of his wilderness rocks, Colman was evidently interested in creating a forceful visual expression of his message, and his rocks look very stylized by comparison with West's. Nevertheless, the two painters may have shared a model - and of course they may have known one another, since they were both working in Bristol in the 1820s and 1830s.

Another, and perhaps more likely, source of ideas for Colman when he was working on The Delivery of Israel was Turner's Field of Waterloo. This was shown at the R.A. in 1818, but the immediate impetus to Colman's particular view of the Egyptian army could have been given by the engraving apparently issued in May, 1830, and possibly also, in an earlier state, the previous July.[37] As Plate 50 shows, this battle scene (which, from an Englishman's point of view, was a scene of liberation, albeit a very sad sight) gives the viewer a close-up picture of some of the dead, heaped together where they fell. The mourning women, backlit dramatically in the centre, along with the fallen pieces of battle gear, look as if they could have provided Colman with a starting point for his group of soldiers, with their baggage, and the chariot wheels nearby. The startling explosion of light in the distance, immediately opposite the viewer, in the Turner, is also a very possible source of supernatural lighting effects for Colman, and for Martin and Danby.

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[37] See Wilton, Turner and the Sublime, p. 155.

The controlling factor in Colman's Delivery of Israel, the reason for his selection of particular compositional arrangements and specific lighting effects, was evidently his need to impress his viewers with the grandeur of God, and the out-reaching, encircling, all-powerful light of his presence. He had to express the idea that he was illustrating God's sovereignty at the Red Sea, when Moses needed God's help, and again, at the Last Judgement, when the True Church will stand where Moses and his people stand in this picture, watching the confusion of those who reject God and his light. 'And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints' (Revelation 15.3). The picture is powerfully three-dimensional, with its long channel of swirling figures lost in a tunnel which ends in the little cloud and the pillar of fire above Moses. There is almost the impression of looking through a distorting lens, so that a nearby landscape seems very small and distant, or of gazing up into a high, circular ceiling painting, a Mannerist Last Judgement, perhaps. On the other hand, the picture also has a strong vertical emphasis. If one ignores the pull of the 'tunnel', and the depth suggested immediately by the rings of light reaching towards the foreground from the triumphant centre of the circle, one sees a composition which is remarkably similar to traditional Last Judgement scenes, and even more interestingly close in general layout to William Blake's watercolours of A Vision of the Last Judgment, carried out about twenty-five years before Colman's Delivery of Israel.[38] Blake's inspiration came, in large part, from Michelangelo, but Colman's painting shows no signs of that influence. It shares with Blake the traditional glorious, brightly lit 'throne room' under the clouds at the top of the picture space, below which agonized 'judgement' takes place, as the wicked fall back helplessly into the darkness outside 'the rainbow round about the throne' which is described in Revelation 4.3. Colman shares Blake's interest in symmetrical design - witness the flag-bearing figures on either side of the central pathway, in the middle distance of The Delivery of Israel. Colman's shaping of the channel of the sea, so that the doomed army appears to rise weightlessly at either side before being swept to its death, also reminds one of the floating figures in Blake's designs.

There is no evidence that Colman would have been able to see Blake's watercolours of the Last Judgement. There are also so many other equally plausible, or more likely influences on Colman's painting which can be recognized, that the most sensible conclusion is that both artists, each of them totally committed to his 'vision', drew on a shared heritage of art. The resulting syntheses were visually similar, Colman sharing Blake's sensitivity to the Romantic 'magical beyond' and (more important in Blake's case) to powerful arch-forms and spreading symmetrical shapes.[39]

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[38] See Butlin, p. 109.

Colman's Belshazzar's Feast has been given very detailed coverage in Chapter Six. As with The Deluge and The Delivery of Israel, the painting shows that the artist gathered material from a wide variety of sources, ranging from popular 'catastrophe' pictures by his contemporary, John Martin, to emblems dating back at least as far as the sixteenth century. In Chapter Six I noted that this painting is particularly rich in contrasts between good and evil and that, at one level, it can be regarded as a blasphemous version of the Last Supper. Simultaneously, however, the subject is both Belshazzar's Feast and the Last Judgement, so the banqueting scene is also an evil counterpart of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Colman is asking his viewers to picture, instead of Belshazzar's throne, surrounded by revellers who are thrown into confusion by the coming of Cyrus, the throne of the 'Lord God omnipotent', with all his elders and angels making music: 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready . . . Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb' (Revelation 19.7,9). The huge scarlet dais, with Belshazzar's false gods honoured in

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39 Evidence of just how closely related two paintings of the Romantic period can look, though clearly produced by artists who shared nothing but the same era and the same commitment to their separate denominations, can be had by comparing Colman's Delivery of Israel (1830) with the Holy Trinity (c.1830) by Domingos António de Sequeira (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon). See Robert Rosenblum and H.W. Janson, Art of the Nineteenth Century: Painting and Sculpture (New York, 1984), p. 155, Fig. 110.

its decorations, is soon to be destroyed, and God's light let in to the room which is now overshadowed by the throne and its canopy; and, with similar suddenness, the proud and rebellious people of the end of time, who cast an evil shadow over the earth, will be destroyed 'with the brightness of his coming' (II Thessalonians 2.8).

As a vision of the sudden and decisive Second Advent of Christ, The Coming of the Messiah and the Destruction of Babylon is probably best linked with the following words from Revelation, Chapter 19, describing the Messiah and his victory:

> And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God (verse 13) . . . and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (verse 15) . . . And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him (verse 19).

The call to battle was rephrased from Revelation by Robert Pollok in The Course of Time:

Meantime a mighty angel stood in heaven,
And cried aloud - Associate now yourselves,
Ye Princes! potentates! and men of war!
And mitred heads! associate now yourselves;
And be dispersed: embattle and be broken:
Gird on your armour, and be dashed to dust![40]

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[40] The Course of Time: a Poem, in Ten Books, 2 volumes (London, 1827), Vol. I, p. 245.

The view St John was given of this Christ was of a warrior on horseback. However, perhaps because he was constructing an emblem of the kind projected on the picture in Chapter Eight, Colman chose to show his Messiah as the Resurrected Christ. And in fact, the painting gives prominence, not only to the destruction of Babylon (and to all that Babylon implies, symbolically) but to the gathering of Christ's remnant flock into his fold, or 'Peaceable Kingdom'. And it is of particular interest, in this chapter, when Colman's symbolic use of light and of the sun is under examination, to see that the Christ-figure he has placed in the centre of his picture descends, as an emblem, from the classical sun-god defined in the Apollo Belvedere.

Long before Colman borrowed the design for his Christ, the Apollo Belvedere was a favourite model for artists, so that it might seem to be straining after meaning to suggest that the pose is of any importance in this picture. After all, Benjamin West used it a number of times - for the Baptist, for example, in John the Baptist Baptising Our Saviour.[41] The same ultimate source is obviously the model for West's Christ in The Resurrection (c. 1782-83).[42] Another 'Belvedere' Christ, no doubt based on a West interpretation, appears as a wood engraving by John Scoles, printed as the frontispiece of an 1801 New Testament published in New York, for William Durrell. This Christ, like Colman's, is shown as Lord of a Peaceable Kingdom, though he is also surrounded by clouds of glory and the dove of the Holy Spirit hovers over his head.[43]

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[41] The picture is in the collection of the Bob Jones University, Greenville, South Carolina. For a reproduction, see Meyer, 'Benjamin West's Chapel of Revealed Religion', p. 257.

[42] See (for a reproduction and discussion) Nancy Pressly, Revealed Religion, pp. 53, 54.

West and Scoles picture the Messiah as a bearded figure, following a long tradition of Christian iconography. Colman's presentation of a beardless Saviour may mean that he was conscious of the classical model - though not necessarily familiar with the Roman marble in the Vatican Museum. The solemn, youthful Messiah recalls Blake's watercolour of The Angel of the Revelation (c. 1805, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) or even The Sun at his Eastern Gate (c. 1816-20, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York).[44] At all events, the possibility that Colman was using the ancient god as a symbol of idolatry and evil, of paganism and perhaps even of all the ideas bound together in the word 'Roman', is something which should be kept in mind in connection with the imagery in The Edge of Doom. What is certain is that the familiar stance of the Messiah gives, even to this primitive emblem, a certain dignity, even kingliness. One is forced by the gestures of the figure to look at the landscape, with its own signals to Bible texts, and to consider the promises emphatically given. Thomas Carlyle's translation of the second stanza of 'Ein 'feste Burg' (Luther's great hymn) provides an appropriate summary of Colman's emblem of the Sovereign Christ, as he appears in this setting:

> With force of arms we nothing can,
> Full soon were we down-ridden;

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[43] There is a reproduction in Elizabeth Gilmore Holt's 'Revivalist Themes in American Prints', p. 35.

[44] See Butlin, pp. 95 and 119.

But for us fights the proper Man,
Whom God himself hath bidden.
        Ask ye, Who is this same?
        Christ Jesus is his name,
        The Lord Sabaoth's Son;
        He, and no other one,
Shall conquer in the battle.

In The Destruction of the Temple the sovereignty of Christ Jesus is expressed, not in a human figure, but in the 'sign of the Son of man in heaven', as foretold by Christ to his disciples (Matthew 24.30). This sign is the tiny, bright cross in the sky, above the cloud that lies serenely over the central mountain. I have mentioned already the dark cross in the confused area below. There is no ambiguity about the meaning here; Colman is obviously emphasizing the displacement of the dark cross on which Christ died for the sins of humanity (and which he also seems to have linked with the power of Papal Rome) by the splendid light of his New Jerusalem, or of his cleansing, renewing power.

It may be worth observing that, just as in The Delivery of Israel Colman used some of the formulae of a conventional Roman Catholic Last Judgement altarpiece or wall painting in order to convey the full meaning of his own 'sermon', this painting, The Destruction of the Temple, has about it the general appearance of a traditional altarpiece. The central portion, separated from the side 'wings' by the breaking piers of the church, can be taken to derive from a crucifixion scene, even to the foreground figures - although these might also appear in a Renaissance painting of the Resurrection. The areas of the painting to left and right look like open panels of a triptych, the one on the left showing the rising saints, caught up into the heavens at the Second Advent, the other representing various types of prepared, or unprepared humanity. The church building at the left is symbolic of false religion, and topples, while on the right the True Church stands solidly, supporting the living vine of Christ on its walls, and ready for the 'harvest' of his coming.

The Edge of Doom (Pl. 116) is both a dramatic avowal of Samuel Colman's beliefs and a mysterious testimony to his interests outside Congregationalism.

This painting is signed and dated, an unusual feature in Colman's surviving work. As noted earlier, there are two dates marked on the painting: 1836 and 1838, and either date would tally with the compositional similarity between this picture and Francis Danby's picture, An Attempt to Illustrate the Opening of the Sixth Seal (Pl. 118). Danby's painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1828. Colman could have seen it in London, it is to be supposed, although it is more likely that he would have had a chance to study it while it was on show in Bristol during the 1835-36 season at the Bristol Institution. The local newspapers advertised the opportunity to view the picture 'lately in the collection of William Beckford, Esq., Fonthill'.[45] The similarities between Danby's picture and Colman's are no more than superficial. Each artist used the same stock elements of catastrophe: geological upheaval, fire in various forms, dark clouds menacing the upper stretches of the canvas. The fallen figure in the left foreground of Danby's painting appears to have suited Colman's requirements on more than one occasion - just as it suited Danby. For this is the 'Climber of Helvellyn' Danby is thought to have sketched about 1825. Colman seems to have borrowed this figure as a pattern for his vanquished soldiers in The Delivery of Israel and in The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host; and the same general pose is taken by the tumbling form of Time in The Edge of Doom.

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[45] Bristol Mercury, 12 December 1835, p. 3, col. 2.

In other respects, however, Colman's painting is free from Danby's influence and stands as a monument to the 'emblem habit' in English religious thinking.

Among the images in The Edge of Doom which stand out as Judgement symbols, the carriage on the right is particularly interesting because it is an image also used by William Blake, to great effect, not only verbal effect (in the magnificent second stanza of 'Jerusalem') but visual, as in God Judging Adam (Tate Gallery) in which God the Father sits in his chariot of fire (the sun), drawn by a horse with flames for mane and tail.

In Colman's painting the carriage, which does not seem to have an occupant, is more akin to Shelley's wandering 'car of life' (in The Triumph of Life, 1822). In the painting the carriage is decorated with several crests, indicating that it is a symbol of human power, or man's self-importance. Its frailty is in marked contrast to the power of God, who was commonly described in Colman's day as coming to the Judgement driving his 'Chariots of Wrath'. The image was very probably drawn from Psalm 104, in verses 2 and 3 of which the Lord is described as one who 'coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind'. This magnificent poetry did not prevent Isaac Watts from having a go at describing 'God the Thunderer':

His sounding chariot shakes the sky;
He makes the clouds his throne;
There all his stores of lightning lie,
Till vengeance darts them down.

Tempests of angry fire shall roll
To blast the rebel worm,
And beat upon his naked soul
In one eternal storm.[46]

By using another symbol painted in considerable detail, Colman makes a telling contrast between this mighty Thunderer and an ancient rival. The symbol is the tiny reproduction of Guido Reni's huge ceiling painting in Rome - the celebrated picture of Apollo driving his chariot across the sky behind Aurora (the dawn). The young god is in the company of maidens personifying the Hours, and of a sturdy 'putto' carrying a torch and representing the Morning Star. As noted in Chapter Six, this painting was carried out about 1614 for Cardinal Scipio Borghese, to decorate the Breakfast Room of the palace of Montecavallo - the Casino Rospigliosi Pallavicini. If Colman knew the details of the commission it is likely that they made a neat connection for him between Pagan Rome and Papal Rome. It is not totally inconceivable that Colman could have seen the actual painting; he could have visited Rome

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[46] Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Book II, Hymn LXII, verses 2 and 6.

- perhaps accompanying some gentleman on the 'Grand Tour'. The subdued colours of his copy of Aurora, though not the same as Guido's, suggest a sensitivity to the original that went deeper than a mere purchase of an engraving.[47] However, there would have been copies for him to see nearer home.

Apollo had many attributes - partly because in late classical mythology Apollo and Helios came to be identified as one god. Helios was the god of the sun - the Romans called him Sol. He drove a chariot pulled by horses, riding across the sky from east to west. Apollo was the god of prophecy and the controller of plagues and of death - a god of punishment. In association with his son, Asklepios, who restored the dead to life and paid their ransom with his own life, Apollo was also the god of healing. One of the symbols by which he is best known is the lyre; he was father of Orpheus the minstrel. In Reni's picture Apollo is shown as god of youth and beauty - a radiant being whose 'comeliness' is in marked contrast to the description of God's son transmitted by Isaiah: 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him' (Isaiah 53.2).

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[47] For a colour reproduction of Guido's painting, see Cesare Garboli, L'Opera Completa di Guido Reni (Milan, 1971), Plates XX and XXI. For a list of engravings in print in Colman's lifetime, see John and Josiah Boydell, An Alphabetical Catalogue of Plates Engraved by the Most Esteemed Artists after the finest Pictures and Drawings of the Italian, Flemish, German, French, English and other Schools (London, 1803). An engraving by Baillie after Guido's Aurora is advertised on page 57. A print of Guido's Assumption (which is 'quoted' by Colman in The Destruction of the Temple) was also on sale. The painting was copied by one of the Bones, possibly H.P. Bone, in the early 1830s; Constable told Leslie in 1835 that he had seen what he referred to as 'a lovely drawing of young Bone's, of the Guido "Aurora"'. See John Constable's Correspondence, III, p. 26.

The metaphor of the sun is applied to Christ in several places in the Bible. The most dramatic of these is in Malachi, in the prophecy of the coming of a Messiah to destroy all pretenders to the throne of his kingdom:

> For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Malachi 4.1,2).

Matthew Henry interprets this passage as a prophecy of both the first and second advents of Christ, and of events associated with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. He also considers that the passage 'is certainly applicable, and is to be applied, to the day of judgment, to the particular judgment at death . . . but especially it will have its accomplishment in the general judgment, at the end of time, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire, to execute judgment on the proud'.[48] The commentary continues with a long discussion of Christ as Sun and Light, in which the author cites text after text from the Old and the New Testaments to support the identification of the Sun of Righteousness with Christ and to expand the meanings of Light and Righteousness and Sun. Following Calvin, Henry interprets the 'wings' of Christ's healing as rays of light.

> He shall arise with healing under his wings, or, in his rays, or beams, which are as the wings of the sun. Christ came, as the Sun, to bring not only light to a dark world, but health to a diseased distempered world . . . Christ came into the world to be the great Physician . . . when he was upon earth, he went about as the Sun in his circuit, doing this good; he healed by wholesale, as the Sun does . . . But his healing

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[48] See also Calvin's Commentaries, translated and edited by J. Haroutunian and Louise Pettibone Smith (London, 1958), pp. 143-145.

bodily diseases was a specimen of his great design in coming into the world to heal the diseases of men's souls.49

Summarizing his view of the passage in Malachi, the Revd Henry writes:

> Christ's second coming will be a glorious and welcome sun-rising to all that fear his name; it will be that morning of the resurrection, in which the upright shall have dominion . . . The day that comes, as it will be a stormy day to the wicked, a day in which God will rain upon them fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest . . . a day of clouds and thick darkness . . . so it will be a fair and bright day to those who fear God, and reviving as the rising sun is to the earth.

In Colman's painting light spreads from an unseen source above the horizon, high up in a dark, convulsed sky.[50] Directly below, at the fork made by the two broken columns, Time falls backwards from a

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[49] Thomas Scott's commentary on the same passage agrees with Matthew Henry's interpretation of the 'wings'.

[50] I have not seen the painting, and have based my observations on the bright beams of light in the sky in the reproductions obtained from the Brooklyn Museum and on a description given by Ronald Parkinson (Samuel Colman: Four Apocalyptic Themes) after he had seen the picture in 1976. He described the sky then as lit by a 'brilliant white light'. In a telephone conversation with me (23 April 1985) he said he remembered the picture as giving the impression of brightness in the sky, and that he felt Colman must have intended the central portion of the sky, and the lightning emanating from it, to indicate supernatural control of the events taking place below. Morton Paley, on the other hand, looked at the picture in 1983 at the Brooklyn Museum, and felt that the reproductions were misleading, and that 'the painting has no such radiance; the top center is murky, the whites being overpowered by clouds and rain' (Letter to Margaret Whidden, 1 October 1983). Without first-hand experience of the picture, I have to resort to the conclusion that viewing conditions must make a big difference to the appearance of the painting, which is said to be in a sound state of preservation. Dr Paley (wisely, in view of his received impression of the painting) warns against an association between the text in Malachi and this Judgement scene. However, the powerfully emblematic appearance of the Shakespeare statue and the 'chariot', and the detailed miniature version of the Aurora seem to insist on a search for meaning which can take in the range of symbols connected with the god Apollo and his Christian counterpart and overcomer. Perhaps Matthew Henry's emphasis on the way in which the Advent will appear to the wicked is important. The 'stormy day' is what is shown, but it is, beyond that storm, 'fair and bright' to the unseen redeemed, watching these ultimate cleansings and renewings below them.

symbolic globe, dropping his hour-glass. From the easel beside Time slips the miniature version of Guido's Aurora, taking with it a little palette. A lyre can be seen just beyond the easel. To the right of the winged and overturned Time droops a chain with a broken link; near it there is a crown and a broken sceptre.

Matthew Henry does not supply Colman in the notes on Malachi with a direct pointer to Apollo as the pagan claimant to the virtues and powers of the Son of Jehovah. However, on page iv of his Volume IV of the Exposition he does refer to 'the oracle of Apollo at Delphos and that of Jupiter Trophonius; which, with others like them, were famous for many ages, during the prevalency of the kingdom of darkness, but (as appears by some of the pagan writers themselves) they were all silenced and struck dumb, when the gospel (that truly divine oracle) began to be preached to the nations'.

The painting of Apollo is a symbol of all that is the opposite of Colman's Independency. With it he is 'prophesying' the casting down of all untruth, pagan and Roman Catholic, and the banishment of false prophecy, false judgement, false healing, false light. As Time collapses, the Sun of Righteousness rises 'with healing in his wings' to replace eternally all pretenders to his true attributes and position: 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ' (Revelation 11.15). This picture is Colman's strongest affirmation of the essence of Calvinist teaching at its most positive.

A remarkably similar idea is contained in Turner's painting, Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus (1829, National Gallery, London). Plate 119 fails to show the detail, but in the distance, on the horizon, the rising sun is overlaid with the faint image of Apollo's horse-drawn chariot, while on the left there is another spot of light, the fire of the cyclops' forge. The triumphant Apollo - not an anti-christian figure here, but himself a symbol of glorious light - is a reference to the victory of Ulysses and his god over the one-eyed, threatening monster.

Sun mythology and sun gods were popular with the Romantic poets, who viewed the sun as both a good and evil symbol.[51] Shelley's Sun (which is described in language which recalls Psalm 19) is a force for good, resembling Colman's. This is how it appears at the beginning of The Triumph of Life:

> Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
> of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
> Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask
> of darkness fell from the awakened earth.

Blake's interest in the sun has already been touched on. Of particular relevance here is the sun image in his watercolour, Death on a Pale Horse (c. 1800, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge). Morton Paley has drawn attention to the feathers which 'distinctly emanate from the disc of the sun in the upper part of the picture'.[52] Dr Paley suggests that although these feathers are not mentioned in Revelation, Blake 'may be making a visual cross-reference to Psalm 91.4 . . . There may alternatively or additionally be a reference here to Malachi 4.2'. This, of course, is the text which gives the promise of the 'sun of righteousness' who will 'arise with healing in his wings'. Dr Paley points to the aptness of the link between the imagery of Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament) and that of the book of Revelation (which ends the New Testament). 'It seems likely', he concludes, 'that the yellow feathers in Death on a Pale Horse suggest both the sword and buckler of Psalms and the healing of Malachi, countering the sword wielded by death and healing the wounds it deals'.

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[51] See Paulson, Literary Landscape, Chapter 8, especially pp. 86-88.

[52] Again I am quoting from The Apocalyptic Sublime, which is in preparation.

There is one other symbol to be discussed - the statue of Shakespeare which in The Edge of Doom stands over the globe of the earth and appears to be untouched by the furnace of hell just behind. That Shakespeare should be chosen as a symbol by a Congregationalist artist comes as a surprise to most viewers of the painting. Congregationalists, and Dissenters in general, were usually opposed to theatre attendance. A Congregational minister, John Campbell, was one of the most active campaigners against the theatre, in his General Amusements, published in 1839. In the early to mid nineteenth century the theatre was definitely not 'respectable' by later standards. For the most part it provided entertainment for working-class folk, and 'religious' middle-class people stayed away, not so much in disapproval of the plays as of the low moral standards associated with many of the players. Many people also considered that the theatre wooed the lower orders away from the churches and chapels by offering them cheap amusements, when the workers ought to have been improving their minds (looking after their souls) by attending religious services.

Instead of going to the theatre as such, many people attended concerts and lectures and enjoyed such sights as the panorama or the numerous variants on the diorama.[53] In addition to these hybrids of painting and theatre there were also travelling menageries and Madame Tussaud's wax-works (which was visiting Bristol when the 1831 riots broke out).[54] 'In fact', says Michael Baker, in his book about the Victorian theatre, 'ways in which Victorians indulged in theatricals without sinning were infinitely variable'.[55] The comment applies equally well to pre-Victorian nineteenth-century Dissenters - and helps to account for the very theatrical appearance of Samuel Colman's apocalyptic pictures. They might have been made for a diorama, one might say, if it were not for the extremely detailed symbolism which becomes noticeable after the impact of the vivid colours has been made. The fiery reds, particularly vivid in The Edge of Doom and in The Destruction of the Temple, suggest that Colman may have been familiar with 'red fire', a crimson vapour used in the theatre to give the effect of an actual conflagration.[56]

While the theatre itself was normally out of bounds to Dissenters, plays were quite often read by young and old alike. Westland Marston recalled in the 1880s that his father, a Dissenting minister, encouraged his son to recite Greek tragedy, although he regarded the professional theatre as vice-ridden.[57] Of Edward Baines the Elder, his son recalled that he 'luxuriated, though sparingly in Shakespeare'.[58] And the Revd John Foster noted in his diary that he had read 'an hour or two in Shakespeare, with astonishment at the incomparable accuracy, and as it were tangible relief of all his images'.[59]

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[53] See Chapter Three, above.

[54] Mme Tussaud's exhibition was advertised in the Bristol Mirror of 27 August 1831 (p. 3, col. 5) as an 'unrivalled novelty' to be held in the Assembly Rooms.

[55] The Rise of the Victorian Actor, (London, 1978), p. 53.

[56] For more information about 'effects' on the stage at this period see Fawcett, The Rise of English Provincial Art, pp. 162 and 163.

For Samuel Colman, matters theatrical appear to have held more than ordinary fascination. His paintings look stagy, as I have already suggested. Perhaps Colman earned a part of his livelihood as a painter of dioramas or cosmoramas. Again, it may not have been due simply to its accessibility or to its appropriateness that Colman chose for his model of Cyrus Lawrence's portrait of the actor Kemble playing Rolla. And Colman's Belshazzar was cast as Shakespeare's Richard III, played by Garrick and made immortal in the role by William Hogarth. Finally, in The Edge of Doom Colman chose to depict Shakespeare as a prophet, standing at the cross-roads between heaven and hell. As on the original memorial by Scheemakers, the painter reproduced on the plinth of the statue the famous lines from Prospero's speech in Act IV, Sc. 1 of The Tempest:

> The cloud capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temple, the great globe itself,

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[57] John Westland Marston, Our Recent Actors (London, 1888), Vol. I, pp. 5,6.

[58] E. Baines, The Life of Edward Baines (London, 1851), p. 364, quoted in Binfield, So Down to Prayers, p. 66.

[59] The note was one of 'miscellaneous observations' made at Frome between 1804 and 1808. See Ryland's Life and Correspondence of John Foster, Vol. I, p. 357.

> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
> Leave not a rack behind.

Can it be mere coincidence that The Tempest was performed in Bristol, at the Theatre Royal, in 1833?[60]

Colman's selection of the famous statue of Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey to use as an emblem, suggests that he may have visited Poets' Corner. It is intriguing to suppose that he was reminded there of these words written by Isaac Watts:

> Are we standing in the church-yard, paying the last honours to the relics of our friends? . . . What are the tombstones but memorials of the inhabitants of that town, to inform us of the period of all their lives, and to point out the day when it was said to each of them, 'Your time shall be no longer'. 61

Watts, it should be recalled, used the metaphor of the stage to refer to life: 'We shall be swept off the stage of this visible world', he said in reference to death.[62] Watts probably received his metaphor from Calvin. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the emblem of 'all the world' as a stage was common and the same thinking on I Corinthians 7.29-31 which inspired an influential commentary by Calvin and other similar commentaries by his descendants in Protestant scholarship produced Shakespeare's poetry about the stuff of dreams.[63]

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[60] See Kathleen Barker, The Theatre Royal, Bristol, 1766-1966: Two Centuries of Stage History (London, 1974), p. 107. The present title of the painting has, of course, nothing to do with The Tempest. It is a quoted phrase from Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, and is apparently a dealer's title. See my Catalogue for further details.

[61] The World to Come, p. 15.

[62] The World to Come, p. 2.

It seems quite possible that Colman would have recognized a similarity between Shakespeare's lines and the words of I Corinthians 7.31: 'For the fashion of this world passeth away'. More important, he may well have read Matthew Henry's commentary on this text. Henry says, 'How irrational it is to be affected with the images, the fading and transient images of a dream! Surely man walketh in a vain shew . . . in an image, amidst the faint and vanishing appearance of things'. Calvin's own commentary on the same text is interesting: 'Nothing . . . is firm or sure, for it is only a vision or outward show. But he seemeth to have alluded to pavillions or halls, in the which when the tapestry and costly hangings are pulled down, and wrapped up in a moment, there appeareth another show'.[64] In Colman's painting, there are 'costly hangings' which appear to have been 'wrapped up in a moment' at the violently theatrical end of the 'play' of life.

William Blake believed that Christ was manifested in the Poetic Genius.[65] And the artist's identification of his own body with Christ's was not a new idea, as self-portraits by Dürer and Samuel Palmer demonstrate. Van Gogh painted a Pietà in which his own face represents Christ's.[66] Is Samuel Colman asking us, then, to see Shakespeare, and the poetic genius for which he stands, as a 'type' of Christ, like Moses or David? The idea is intriguing.

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[63] Shakespeare was borrowing directly from lines written by William Alexander, whose Tragedie of Darius was published in 1603. There is a 1971 reprint of this work by the Da Capo Press (Amsterdam and New York). The relevant section is to be found in Act IV, Sc. 2.

[64] This is the Tymme translation of Calvin's commentary, as quoted by R.M. Frye in Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine (Princeton, 1963), p. 149. Tymme's translation was published in London in 1577 and the reference is to fol. 87. Calvin had a similar comment to make on Psalm 103.15,16. Life, he said, was 'only a show or phantom that passes away'.

[65] See Tannenbaum, Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies, p. 75.

There is, however, the stronger possibility that, like Turner's Angel Standing in the Sun (1846, Tate Gallery) Shakespeare in The Edge of Doom is actually a symbol, not only of the great angel of the Apocalypse described in Revelation 19.17, but a visionary self-portrait of the artist himself.[67] Unlike Blake's tiny St John in The Angel of the Revelation (a watercolour carried out about 1805, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York), this artist-prophet faces out of the picture, acting the part of the preacher, rather than inviting the viewer to participate with him in the vision.[68]

If Shakespeare is Colman, to the extent that Colman put the bard's memorial into the centre of this visionary painting and took the trouble to quote, legibly, the poet's own visionary lines, we must be expected to look closely at these words and take them as the painter's own message to posterity.

It should be noticed that Shakespeare's statue, though it appears to stand firm and upright in this 'horrible tempest' (as Matthew Henry described the day of Christ's Second Coming), may not be intended to last forever. The fire comes very close to the figure, so that one feels that it too, may 'dissolve' and 'leave not a rack behind'. In other words, Shakespeare's prediction in The Tempest is not really very far removed from Paul's promise that 'whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away' (I Corinthians 13.8). The seeming gloom of this prophecy is then gloriously dispelled: 'For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away'.

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[66] The painting is in the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. See Rosenblum, Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, p. 64.

[67] See Paulson, Literary Landscape, p. 91.

[68] For a discussion of Blake's picture see Morton Paley, The Continuing City, p. 141. There is a reproduction in Butlin, p. 95.

At the end of Chapter Four I described Samuel Colman's pictures as expressing his 'essential and unequivocal optimism'. Finding this optimisim again and again in the symbolism of the paintings is one of the most rewarding aspects of the study of a retiring man, who was perhaps also less than fully satisfied in his ambitions.

The theme of destruction which runs through Colman's major works is always balanced by the message of salvation. 'Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God', declares the Psalmist. 'They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright' (Psalm 20.7,8). This is the message of The Delivery of Israel. And a parallel is drawn in Belshazzar's Feast, where 'the mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment' (Psalm 37.30). The faith of Daniel and his fellow captives is justly rewarded. In The Coming of the Messiah the heavens shake and Babylon is 'brought low', but we are also reminded that the Saviour will 'feed his flock like a shepherd' (Isaiah 40.11). With the Day of Judgement will come fear and frenzy. Colman demonstrates in his paintings that this anguish is reserved for the wicked. In The Destruction of the Temple the saints rise from their graves to witness the punishment of the enemies of righteousness. 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday' promises the ancient song (Psalm 37.6).

Finally, in The Edge of Doom, Prospero's musings on 'the baseless fabric of a vision' are simply another way for Colman to offer Jesus' advice to the people in his Sermon on the Mount: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven' (Matthew 6.19, 20). And, for those who remember this advice, there is also Christ's promise (Matthew 28.20) that he will be with his disciples 'even unto the end of the world'. Although the original title of this painting is not known, the words from Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 which have been given to it are, after all, appropriate, provided that the context is taken to be the love of Christ:

> Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove:
> O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken; . . .
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

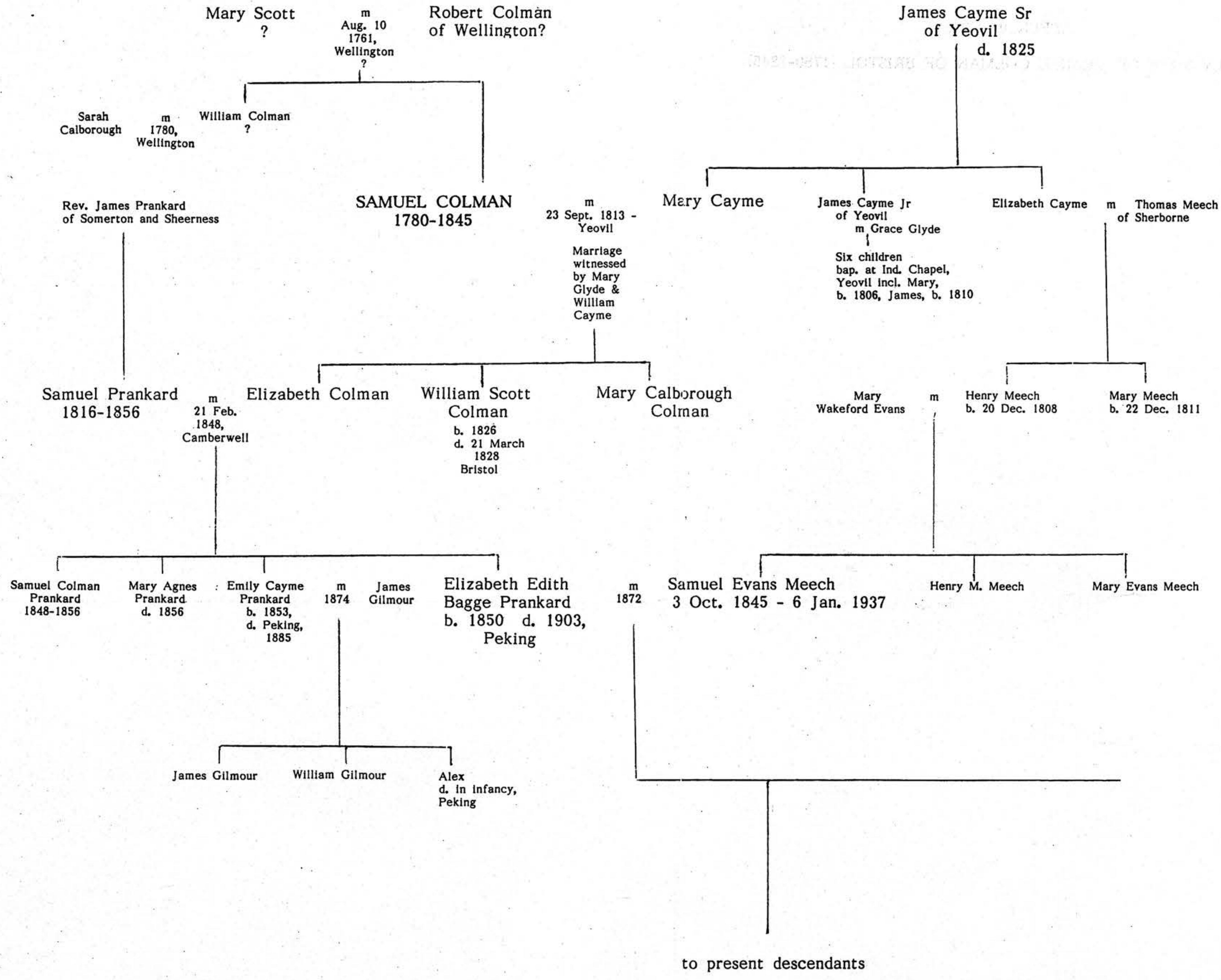
The angry God who is a 'consuming fire' will, when he rises as the Sun of Righteousness, come 'with healing in his wings', with the 'charity' that Paul says 'abideth' and is greater than even faith and hope (I Corinthians 13.13). After the work of his cleansing fire is complete - political and social evils wiped away, unbelievers destroyed - there will be no more need for prophesying, in words or in pictures. 'For now we see through a glass, darkly', wrote Paul, 'but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known'. The dominant mood of Samuel Colman's paintings is exactly this certainty of God's provision for the future. It is this confidence, not in himself, or in his church, or in the eternal renewal of Nature, but in the Master of the Universe, the God of his fathers, which both confirms the Independent artist as a full member of the 'tribe' at Castle Green Meeting or at Zion Chapel, and also entitles him to a special place in the gallery of Romantic art.

APPENDIX ONE

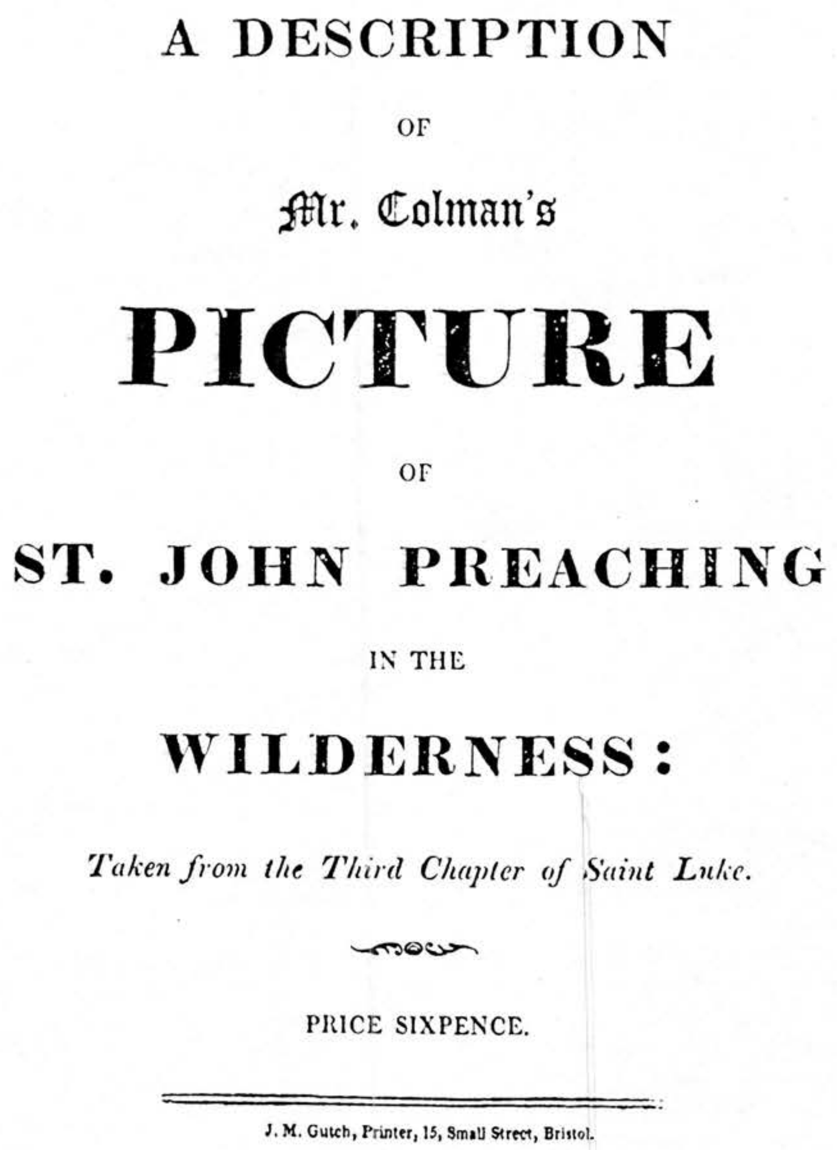
FAMILY TREE OF SAMUEL COLMAN OF BRISTOL (1780-1845)

APPENDIX ONE

FAMILY TREE OF SAMUEL COLMAN OF BRISTOL (1780-1845)


Mary Scott
?
m
Aug. 10
1761,
Wellington
?
Robert Colman
of Wellington?
James Cayme Sr
of Yeovil
d. 1825
Sarah
Calborough
m
1780,
Wellington
William Colman
?
Rev. James Prankard
of Somerton and Sheerness
SAMUEL COLMAN
1780-1845
m
23 Sept. 1813 -
Yeovil
Marriage
witnessed
by Mary
Glyde &
William
Cayme
Mary Cayme
James Cayme Jr
of Yeovil
m Grace Glyde
Six children
bap. at Ind. Chapel,
Yeovil incl. Mary,
b. 1806, James, b. 1810
Elizabeth Cayme
m
Thomas Meech
of Sherborne
Samuel Prankard
1816-1856
m
21 Feb.
1848,
Camberwell
Elizabeth Colman
William Scott
Colman
b. 1826
d. 21 March
1828
Bristol
Mary Calborough
Colman
Mary
Wakeford Evans
m
Henry Meech
b. 20 Dec. 1808
Mary Meech
b. 22 Dec. 1811
Samuel Colman
Prankard
1848-1856
Mary Agnes
Prankard
d. 1856
Emily Cayme
Prankard
b. 1853,
d. Peking,
1885
m
1874
James
Gilmour
Elizabeth Edith
Bagge Prankard
b. 1850 d. 1903,
Peking
m
1872
Samuel Evans Meech
3 Oct. 1845 - 6 Jan. 1937
Henry M. Meech
Mary Evans Meech
James Gilmour
William Gilmour
Alex
d. in infancy,
Peking
to present descendants

APPENDIX TWO



A DESCRIPTION

OF

Mr. Colman's

PICTURE

OF

ST. JOHN PREACHING

IN THE

WILDERNESS:

Taken from the Third Chapter of Saint Luke.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

J. M. Gutch, Printer, 15, Small Street, Bristol.

"AND he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the Prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the Wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves we have Abraham for our father: for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. And the People asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat let him do likewise. Then came also Publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the Soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not," &c.

Description of the Picture.

Saint John stands on a rock, on the left hand: beneath him are interspersed repentant figures waiting for Baptism. More to the right in the picture is a Chief Captain leaning on his shield, who has his attention directed by an insinuating Priest to a converted Soldier breaking his spear: behind this character is another Convert, clothed in purple and scarlet, following the Preacher's admonition, in clothing the naked with his own mantle.—Behind the Chief Captain are two Elders examining the Prophecies, as "All men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not."—The figure more to the right in the picture, and somewhat elevated, is the boasting Pharisee with his wide phylacteries; a second Pharisee shows his aversion to the Prophet's doctrine, by biting his finger; whilst a third ignorantly points to some stones, as signifying the literal meaning, "That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."—The group of Soldiers in dark armour more in the fore-ground are listening to a Priest, who, expounding from the Prophecies, endeavours to prevent their becoming converts to the Baptist's Mission.—The Domestic Group in the corner of the painting are receiving the benediction of a Disciple, previously to their being baptised; whilst in the centre and fore-ground of the picture, a boy is informing his sister of the Baptist's mode of administering that rite. Beneath the feet of Saint John is a withered Tree cut down, explanatory of the Baptist's words, "the axe is laid unto the root of the tree;" and a Serpent (descriptive of Sin), is recovering from a deadly blow and cleaving to its branches.—The figures are about seven hundred, which number may not be considered as overcharging the subject, when the Evangelist describes them as a multitude.

The Scenery is painted from Dr. Clarke's Travels in the Holy Land.

The effect intended to be produced is a wild sublimity. The bursting of a cloud in a mountainous country is a frequent occurrence, of which the Painter avails himself to make St. John the more conspicuous, and which serves also to convey the idea, that what he delivered was accompanied with a Divine power. The Soldier breaking his spear will not be considered extravagant, when, as a convert to Christianity, he complies with the Baptist's injunction in destroying those weapons by which he had committed violence.—The activity of the Priests in opposing the Preacher's doctrine, it is presumed may also be allowed, each of these circumstances agitating the scene, and assisting in producing the intended effect.

The Painter considers that the subject requires *partial* brilliancy of colouring, from the Dispensation bringing with it "Glad tidings of great joy;" or, in the luxuriant language of Prophecy, that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

S. C.

APPENDIX THREE

Newspaper Review of St John Preaching in the Wilderness

Bristol Mercury

Saturday, 25 August 1821, page 3, column 4

Mr. COLMAN'S PICTURE

To the Editor of The Bristol Mercury

Sir, - You have, no doubt, seen Mr. Colman's Picture of St. John Preaching in the Wilderness, and you may, through the medium of your Paper, convey some useful information to him. Hints of this sort, it is true, are seldom very kindly received, or good-naturedly given; but, in this instance, let Mr. Colman take it as he may; nothing is offensively meant, nor is there any thing of sarcasm, vainglory, envy, hatred, malice, or any other uncharitableness.

A man, who stands forward a candidate for public approbation, is not to be measured by his pretensions: nor is the height or depression of his merits to be so determined: if they rise to a certain point in the scale of criticism, all above it is the sunshine of merited applause; below it lies the darkness of deserved censure, and between them comes the twilight of public indulgence. At first this is broad and ample, and affords a comfortable resting-place; but the sin of repetition gradually renders it less easy, and at last entirely wears it out.

Mr. Colman has, from time to time, exhibited pictures, and modestly enough left them to recommend themselves by their own particular merits; but the present one comes before us with all the "pomp and circumstance" of a work of great study and labour; a printed "description" is sold you for sixpence, which tells you, among other things, what Mr. Colman meant to do: of course he cannot be offended to hear in what he has and what he has not succeeded. You learn from the book that "the effect intended to be produced is a wild sublimity;"* but you find nothing of the sort in the picture, the landscape is the best part of the whole, and, in some respects, does the artist credit; but in conception it is common place and uncharacteristic, - in colour it is cold, green, mannered, and monotonous, having none of the freshness or variety of nature; no atmosphere over it, no keeping in it, but is a disjointed, incongruous mass, from the distance to the foreground.

You are told, "the painter considers that the subject requires partial brilliancy of colouring, from the dispensation bringing with it 'glad tidings of great joy;' or, in the luxuriant language of prophecy, that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." This is the reason, according to Mr. Colman, why the subject requires partial brilliancy of colour; - it is too far-fetched and too silly to require comment. "Beneath St. John's feet is a withered tree, cut down, explanatory of the Baptist's words, 'the axe is laid unto the root of the tree.' " This the artist has very sublimely illustrated by a kind of practical pun, - making a deep cut in the root of the tree! ! ! Suspended on a branch of this same withered and cut-down tree is a "serpent, descriptive of Sin recovering from a deadly blow." All this is, of course, very consistent and explanatory; and it helps to swell out the catalogue of its merits, and gives you the more to read for your sixpence.

Now comes the greatest wonder of all. You are told, "the figures are about seven hundred, which number may not be considered as over-charging the subject, when the Evangelist describes them as a multitude." Why seven hundred are necessary to form a multitude you are not told; the plain fact is, it sounds pompously to say the picture contains seven hundred figures; but it looks the worse, for out of so great a number not a decent one is to be found: a more miserable assemblage was certainly never brought together; they are much worse than the landscape, and can only be matched in the vapid, mean, and senseless conception of them, by their ill-drawn, distorted limbs, affected colour, and unmeaning faces. It is almost absurd to pick out one of these unfortunate abortions from the rest; but, if we do so, laughter becomes irresistible; nay, even Mr. Colman himself would laugh, if in fancy (not in reality, I suppose) we were to cut out "the soldier breaking his spear," who, at the same time, seems to have broken both his thighs; but the glitter and glare around him prevents the eye of a common observer from seeing this, as it does most of its other defects. This is a trick repeatedly resorted to, and with the same effects; the eye is dazzled and the judgment misled, and the crowd ignorantly applaud, in the multiplicity of parts and variety of colours, what, if they saw separate and alone, they would despise: take this soldier, or the sitting figure by his side, as an example, and the truth of this assertion will be instantly felt. Did Mr. Colman ever see a pair of naked legs in his life? One would think not. I will boldly assert, that he had not a pair before him when he painted those of the last-mentioned figure, or indeed, of any other in the picture. He can find no adequate excuse for these neglects, and deserves censure accordingly.

But there is still a heavier charge than this to be brought against Mr. Colman; his picture, in its character, is calculated to pamper and feed the public taste, which, in the love of finery and show, is already bad enough. Every lover of the fine arts should exert himself to draw the public attention to what is really estimable; pictures displaying well-chosen subjects, incidents, characteristic and beautiful forms, with all the minor graces of effect and colour, and not to delude it with senseless, unmeaning figures, and gaudy colours. I do not intend to charge Mr. Colman with wilfully doing this; but that his picture has that tendency I think he cannot well deny. Perhaps some will be ready to excuse him by saying he has done the best he could; but let me ask whether, before he set about painting a multitude, he should not have qualified himself to paint a human figure. Could he not have done this if he had given time to it? No doubt he could. Is the understanding of expression, and those minute shades of difference in individuals which we denominate character, nothing - is all this necessary to the painter of a multitude? O! no, the trouble may be saved; make seven hundred coloured blots - a long dab will serve for an arm or a leg, a round one for a head, daub this with blue, that with red, yellow, purple, pink, - any thing; use plenty of varnish, get a crimson curtain, a gilt frame, and a long-winded printed "description," and there's a picture! ! ! This sort of practice is now so common, and is so highly disgraceful to the character of painters and inimical to the interests of the art, that a man who really loves it neglects a duty, if he does not, upon all occasions, open his mouth, or employ his pen, to expose it; and the writer of this article would certainly never have done either, but under this impression. Much more might be said in reprobation of such fraudulent practices upon the credulity of the public; but at present I will further only apologise to your readers for presuming to offer myself a finger-post to your judgment.

PHILOGRAPHICUS

*The reader may see something of a "wild sublimity," in Sal. Rosa's picture of this subject (the print of it is very common) of which Mr. Colman's is a debased recollection.

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and a note about archival sources

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