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Ancienneté among the Non-Jurors: a study of Henry Dodwell

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Abstract

The article offers a study of the theological method of Henry Dodwell, the most distinguished British savant of the late Stuart period and a leading figure in the Non-Juring movement. The study takes the form of arguments for the extension of the contemporary dispute between the Ancients and Moderns, in its historiographical dimension, into the field of divinity; for substantial modification of the claims made in discussions of the dispute about the inherent conflict between the Renaissance's desire for revivification of the past and its historical scholarship; and for reconsideration of the relationship between 17th century critical scholarship and the Enlightenment.

The present study may be regarded as treating upon those attitudes to the past and its relationship to the present generally discussed under the rubric of the conflict of the Ancients and the Moderns. This must be taken to refer to far more than the debates at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, associated with the names of Perrault and Fontenelle or Temple and Wotton. If Richard Foster Jones' 'uncritical acceptance of the claims of modernity' has now put his writings beyond the bounds of usefulness,[1] his perception that these debates were of wide significance in the history of ideas, rather than simply an episode in the history of literature, can hardly be abandoned. The identification of historiography as a crucial area of conflict and

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[1] Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca [NY]: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), p. 3. The chief work of Jones referred to is his *Ancients and Moderns: A Study in the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis [MO]: Washington Univ. Press, 1961).

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probing of the significance of the quarrel in discussion of that activity marks the work of Jones' most notable successor, Joseph Levine.[2] This study follows his lead into such history, in our present general sense of thought about the past, as is to be found in works of divinity. For, should historians of early modern historiography wish to retain the modern category of 'history',[3] the works of the divines should be of no less interest to them than those of the antiquarians, lawyers and those the age called historians. Levine is to be valued too for maintaining a limited temporal focus. For, while the quarrel possessed a history and is by no means without interest to students of earlier periods,[4] it is not to be understood except as one of the most important of those inter-related debates that constituted the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment.

Despite historical scholarship's unceasing elaboration of the complexity of the concept of the Enlightenment, convincing statements about the meaning of the term continue to sustain its usefulness. The explanation and contextualisation of the religious thought of the period is particularly well served by these attempts at definition. Justin Champion, for example, develops a conventional emphasis from the history of philosophy on the epistemological significance of the Enlightenment with a description of an assault on clerically ruled institutions as the location of certain knowledge.[5] J.G.A. Pocock somewhat perversely reverses contemporary perceptions to give the disseminators of Enlightenment notions a defensive role, struggling against the power of religious institutions to disrupt civil society.[6] Such definitions uniformly confirm an inclination to identify the Anglican High Churchmen of late Stuart and early Hanoverian Britain, the Non-Jurors pre-eminent among them, as protagonists of the Counter-Enlightenment. The Non-Jurors' resistance to the regime established by the Dutch invasion of 1688 rested on what they called the 'church point'—the unacceptability of the state's removal of those bishops who declined to violate their oaths to the dethroned king. This specific assertion of ecclesiastical autonomy widened—uniting Non-Jurors with High Churchmen in general—into a defence against the regime's efforts to coerce churchmen into abandoning their now subversive political theology of passive obedience. The Non-Jurors' position in relation to the Enlightenment is made clearer

[2] In addition to the work just cited, see especially Levine's *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca [NY]: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), chap. 6.

[3] Henry Dodwell, of whose zeal for history this essay speaks, was no historian to his own age. Contemporaries identified him as a chronologist who engaged in divinity. The methods of study he advocated were those of the antiquarians, who were oblivious of their, at least potential relationship to historians. See D.R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and 'The Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 13–23.

[4] See, for example, Hans Baron, "The Querelle of the Ancients and the Moderns as a Problem for Renaissance Scholarship," in Paul Oskar Kristeller and Philip P. Wiener, eds., *Renaissance Essays*. Library of the History of Ideas, vol. 9 (Rochester, NY: Univ. of Rochester Press, 1992), pp. 95–114.

[5] Justin A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its Enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992). See especially p. 10.

[6] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737-1764*, vol.1 of *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), p. 7.

when the foundations of their assertion of clerical authority are noted. Their Latitudinarian enemies could find little more principled justification for extending the authority of the Church of England, by means of a tolerant comprehension of most shades of religious opinion, than the necessity of combating the more alarming challenges to Christianity and promoting social and political tranquillity. The High Churchmen's demand for clerical acquisition of authority excluded any such comprehension, resting, as it did, on their sacramentology and ecclesiology and having as its purpose the defence of an undiluted orthodoxy.

A locating of the Non-Jurors clearly on the side of the Counter-Enlightenment may and should dispose us to discover them among those who continued 'to hanker after a golden age in the past and to lament the decadence of the modern world.' However, Levine asserts that Non-Jurors were to be found on both sides of the conflict between *ancienneté* and *modernité*. Indeed, in his treatment of Henry Dodwell,[7] an ambivalence and inconsistency with regard to the dispute is discovered in the mind of one whom the comprehensive historian of the Non-Jurors, John Overton, identified as their intellectual leader.[8] Levine holds him to have had a 'muddled mind', which failed to recognise an inherent conflict between his constant application of the most modern critical scholarship, in which he was pre-eminent among his contemporaries, and his belief in the value of the study of antiquity in establishing the norms by which a participatory life in the world was to be led. This accusation of fundamental inconsistency in Dodwell's thought and practice is unwarranted. The present study argues for his unequivocal identification as an upholder of *ancienneté*, when the term is more comprehensively considered and consequently better defined. It examines, in the following section, what might be regarded as those stances of Dodwell which would suggest, but in truth should not lead to placing him on the side of *modernité*. When, however, the relationship of those stances to the matters which chiefly concerned him is noted, as it is in the third section, the appearance of adherence to *modernité* is dispelled. In thus depicting this pre-eminent Non-Juror, it is hoped that the study as a whole will draw attention to matters, which were both central and temporally specific to Non-Juror thought, too often treated as a post-script to the divinity of the Caroline Divines or a prolegomenon to that of the Oxford Movement.

As preliminary explication of the assertion of Dodwell's *ancienneté* and perhaps in anticipation of the more general conclusions that may be drawn from it, an extended comment maybe made about the approach taken by Levine to the study of the debates of the Ancients and Moderns. Initially, Levine's restriction of 'antiquity' to

[7] Levine, *Battle of the Books*, pp. 1, 6, 93–101 and 280. For further discussion of Dodwell by Levine, see his *Dr. Woodward's Shield: History, Science, and Satire in Augustan England* 2nd ed. (Ithaca [NY]: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), chap. 11 and passim.

[8] John H. Overton, *The Nonjurors: Their Lives, Principles, and Writings* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1902), 229–238. The distinguished contemporary historian, Johann Mosheim, not unwarrantably, went further and accorded him intellectual pre-eminence among High Churchmen as a whole. Mosheim is quoted to this effect by Francis Barham in his short biography of Jeremy Collier, which he prefixed to his edition of the latter's *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain*…, vol. 1 (London: William Straker, 1840–41), p. lvii.

pagan antiquity should be noted. In the period spoken of, antiquity's more important part was Christian antiquity. There was a pre-eminence to be given, a reverence due to that sacred era, which a historical revelation had necessarily created. The issue which essentially divided the Ancients and Moderns was the provocative assertion of the latter that it was not uniformly desirable to utilise the norms of antiquity, since the modern age might afford better ones. Such an assertion was deeply disturbing when applied to pagan antiquity. For, if it were to be accepted, it called into question not merely what was accepted as true and right, but the criteria by which such judgements were made and, moreover, the purpose which this intellectual effort served, the restoration of the life of antiquity. When the assertion was applied to Christian antiquity, it was similarly, but even more fundamentally repellent, in that more fundamental and more important areas of human thought and activity were touched upon. The early modern use of the primitive church in providing criteria for theological judgement, if more important to the upholders of the High Church tradition within and without the regnant church, was by no means unimportant to those who reserved the right to take refuge in a strict *sola scriptura* position when a patristic one grew weak.[9] It could hardly have been otherwise in view of the fundamental role of the competing claims to possession of antiquity in the polemical activity which largely constituted the divinity of the post-Reformation centuries.[10] Moreover, this learned discourse was but the expression of a deep and habitual inclination to treat the formative era of Christianity, together with that of the scriptural narrative, to a far greater degree than pagan antiquity, as mythical time, the phenomena of which constituted the enduring experience of humanity, individually and corporatively. The re-creation of this antiquity was a divine, more than a human task. The manifest commitment of Dodwell and High Churchmen like him to it leaves little question about denominating them as champions of *ancienneté*.

The perception Levine obtained of the conflict of the Ancients and Moderns has been regrettably obscured by his belief in an inherent incompatibility and ultimate irreconcilability of the Renaissance's desire to re-create and revivify antiquity and its scholarly means of achieving that re-creation, in that, among other circumstances, the use of latter made it increasingly clear that no such revivification was possible. Though instances may be adduced of a perceived conflict between a normative past and contemporary conditions, these hardly justify acceptance of Levine's belief. Neither the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns nor even the eventual emergence from early modern critical scholarship of the modern historical consciousness, declaring a complete past to be irrevocable in its alien complexity, revealed such irreconcilability. They revealed merely the need for periodic reconsideration of the modes in which norms were to be derived from antiquity and applied. Guided by his perception of inherent incompatibility, Levine perceives commitment to critical scholarship to have been, in itself, a commitment to *modernité*. It is Dodwell's failure

[9] See the remarks of the Scottish bishop, John Sage in his *A Vindication of a Book Entituled "The Principles of the Cyprianic Age…"…* (London: Robert Clavel and George Strahan, 1701), p. 5.

[10] An understanding of this is succinctly conveyed by Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1957), chap. 1.

to grasp this point of Levine that leaves him open to the accusation of mental muddle. In truth, neither Dodwell nor other Ancients whose activity demonstrated their commitment to critical scholarship[11] were rendered partially Moderns by that commitment. However, they were drawn into the complex process by which the learned of the age came to reconsider the manner in which scholarship could assist in revivifying the past. It is certainly legitimate to enquire about the extent to which Dodwell's positions, by contemporary standards, were satisfactory in this respect. Attention is given to this question in the concluding section of this study.

Such reflection, though, raises a wider question about the relationship of contemporary critical scholarship not merely to *ancienneté*, but to Counter-Enlightenment thought in general. The activity of the savants of the 17th century is usually viewed as a prelude to the performance of proponents of the Enlightenment, its influence on the proponents of *modernité* being but a particular case of this. It is desirable to free the earlier scholarship from such teleological misinterpretation and restore to it the range of its primal potentials. These included the firmer establishment of accepted beliefs and understandings, as well as the engendering of conflict with them—and it was the former that was generally sought. Thus, in England, Latitudinarian positions, which did indeed develop into those of the celebrated moderate English Enlightenment, were formed in concern to advance those 'interests best served, for whatever reasons, by preserving inherited or reconstituted institutions.' It is hardly altogether surprising that, having objectives that could be construed as common, the Latitudinarians' more orthodox opponents shared also many of their strategies. In particular, there was a repudiation of 'special claims to private or gnostic knowledge', characteristic of the enthusiast,[12] and a commitment to a discourse accessible to public scrutiny, most commonly expressed in a desire to deal, to use the phrase of the day, with 'matters of fact.'[13] The Non-Jurors in general,[14] and Henry Dodwell in particular, were zealous in their commitment to such a discourse. In other words, the critical scholarship of the 17th-century was at least no less the patrimony of those who very single-mindedly made it

[11] Among these may be numbered, for example, Dodwell's fellow Non-Juror, George Hickes, recalled as a major figure in the history of Germanic philology, and decidedly in sympathy with the Christ Church men against Bentley. See Hickes to Thomas Hearne, 25 May 1715, in Richard L. Harris, ed., *A Chorus of Grammars: The Correspondence of George Hickes and his Collaborators on the "Thesaurus linguarum septrionalium"* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medićval Studies, 1992), p. 425. Cf. Levine, *Battle of the Books*, pp. 54–56.

[12] The term "enthusiast," "enthusiasm," etc. is used here in its contemporary sense, referring to illuminist epistemology. This is most fully discussed by Michael Heyd in his *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, vol. 63. (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

[13] See Richard Kroll's introduction to Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft, and Perez Zagorin, eds., *Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 16–24.

[14] Exceptions are to be found. William Law's adherence to Behmenist theosophy represents a Non-Juring willingness to embrace enthusiasm. See the present writer's "William Law, Behmenism and Counter-Enlightenment," *Harvard Theological Review* 91: 3 (July, 1998): pp. 301–320.

serve ecclesiastical authority, than of those who claimed or accepted that it undermined it.

The commitment of Dodwell and other Non-Jurors to publicly verifiable discourse is hardly remarkable. The vision of chaos in the activity of the sects at the time of the Rebellion and Interregnum renewed and extended such commitment in the intellectual world, but its origin lay in the Arminian assault on orthodox Calvinism. As Peter Harrison remarks, the Arminian assertion that salvation rested on the human choice of belief meant that saving knowledge was no longer part of an 'occult, divinely initiated transaction between God and members of the elect, but like other kinds of knowledge [was]…available to be discussed, to be denied or accepted…'[15] Such desacralisation no doubt gives some insight into the origins of that Arminian Enlightenment, spoken of by Pocock.[16] However, among such as Dodwell, movement was in another direction. Dodwell's use of historical scholarship against the British Calvinists, as dissenters, which engaged his attention so much in the earlier part of his career, showed signs of developing a Counter-Enlightenment defence of ecclesiastical authority against individualistic rationalism. He inveighed against those Dissenters who were 'for expounding the scriptures only by themselves, especially in matters doctrinal', making use of their own 'modern systems' of theology. Against this he maintained the need for a diligent historical reconstruction and application of the mind of the early church, which had produced these scriptures.[17] The movement from enthusiasm to individualistic rationalism, observable in the early Enlightenment,[18] was tracked by those who were well disposed to neither.

The intellectual atmosphere of Trinity College, Dublin, where Dodwell was educated and with the life and scholarship of which he maintained close contact after settling in England in 1674, was both formative of and partially formed by this fundamental scholarly orientation of Dodwell. This is best represented in his approving interest in the cultivation of the methods of the new science by the Dublin Philosophical Society, established in 1683–84 by William Molyneux and St. George Ashe and modelled on the Royal Society in London.[19] Ashe participated in the establishment of a society to complement this, dealing with theological matters. Though it did not wholly shun natural theology, it was more concerned with revealed truth. In this pursuit it clearly shared the zeal manifested by its sister society for the inductive method, more specifically, the study of history. Under the direction

[15] Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), p. 24.

[16] Pocock, *Enlightenments*, chap. 2.

[17] Henry Dodwell, *Separation of Churches from Episcopal Government…Proved Schismatical…* (London: Benj[amin] Tooke, 1679), p. xix, and *Occasional Communion Fundamentally Destructive of the Discipline of the Primitive Church…* (London: S. Keble, 1705), pp. 12–16.

[18] Andrew C. Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1991).

[19] J.G. Simms, *William Molyneux of Dublin 1656–1698* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982), chap. 3.

of Dodwell himself, who had long acted as Ashe's theological mentor, and William Cave, the most celebrated English ecclesiastical historian of the late 17th century, its members devoted most of their efforts to patristic studies.[20]

Trinity's development of the Irish Counter-Enlightenment, spoken of by David Berman, was in the field of epistemology, which Dodwell would not set himself to cultivate. However, in his zeal for the use of a historical method in divinity, he was anxious to preclude or at least discourage other contemporary methods of theologising, notably those espoused by the devotees of natural religion, within or without the bounds of orthodoxy. His device for doing so was an epistemological one and, in revealing it, he indicated his identity with the other thinkers of his own college. His invalidation of the probing of natural theologians into revealed truth was achieved by rendering arbitrary, from a human viewpoint, the relationship between what was propounded by God in his revelation and both the human propositions which expressed this and the motives for giving assent to them.[21] Elaborate disquisitions, such as the one attempted by Samuel Clarke and implicitly attacked by Dodwell in his discussion of immortality, based on naturally derived knowledge of the divine attributes thus became impossible. For terms applied to both divine and human reality could no longer be used univocally and the natural theologian was simply speaking of matters he knew not of.[22] This epistemological tendency was developed among the Trinity divines with the aid of Lockean sensationalism, reaching its highest level of articulation in Bishop Peter Browne's writings on analogy.[23]

Such thought could and did appear dangerously destructive to those formed in a theological environment in which there had long been a preference for approaching the most fundamental matters with a theistic philosophy.[24] It was, however, but intended to clear the way for a more effective apologetic, founded on historically confirmed manifestations of the supernatural,[25] and for a reconstruction of orthodoxy on the foundation of historical texts. For these were now freed from any need to relate to natural discourse about the divine. If most divines continued to incline to fight on the same philosophical ground as their deistic and heterodox opponents and could not easily be persuaded to take their stand on revelation, what Dodwell judged to be the way forward still appealed to many. Thus, in his assault on the rationalism of the philosopher and defence of the rationalism of the historian, he was the forerunner of long enduring tradition of divinity. However, later adherents

[20] Ashe to Dodwell, 18 Dec. 1684, 31 Mar. 1685, 23 June 1685, 31 July 1685, 24 Sept. 1685, 15 Dec. 1685 and 18 Feb. 1686, English Letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40,785), fols. 4–11, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[21] Henry Dodwell, *Two Letters of Advice…for Studies Theological…*, 2nd ed. (London: Benjamin Tooke, 1680), pp. 133–134.

[22] C.D.A. Leighton, "The Religion of the Non-Jurors and the Early British Enlightenment: A Study of Henry Dodwell," *History of European Ideas* 28 (2002): pp. 258–259.

[23] David Berman, "Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment in Irish Philosophy," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 64 (1982): 153–161. For further description of this Irish school, see Berman's "The Culmination and Causation of Irish Philosophy" in the same volume, pp. 257–279.

[24] Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale Univ. Press, 1987).

[25] Leighton, "Religion of the Non-Jurors," pp. 261–262.

of the tradition, notably the Hutchinsonians, preferred to use sources more immediately understandable than Dodwell's own writings. For philosophical arguments Browne and John Ellis, a writer of mid century also closely associated with Dublin, were consulted, while a commitment to history was nourished by the writings of Dodwell's friend, fellow Non-Juror and fellow collegian, Charles Leslie.[26] For the present purposes however, we must continue with an account of precisely how Dodwell himself, perhaps the most able exponent of contemporary critical historical scholarship, sought to offer this as a replacement for the fashionable theology he denigrated.

The Restoration decades, John Gascoigne has explained,[27] constituted a gestation period, terminated by the birth of the 'holy alliance' between the new science, in its Newtonian form, and Anglican apologetics. Whatever else this alliance involved, inductive investigations were, in the first place, required to offer their findings as a support of the biblical narrative. The aid of cosmology, to vindicate the Mosaic account of the world's origins, was particularly appreciated.[28] Dodwell regretted that he found his own field of ancient history much less useful in confirming the accuracy of the sacred text for the unbelieving and doubtful. He himself destroyed the claim to authenticity of a work, ascribed to a Phoenician writer named Sanchoniathon, which was being used to uphold the authority of the Pentateuch. In concluding his study, he stated plainly that any texts certainly independent of the Mosaic witness were silent on matters useful to the apologist, while those which seemed useful could not be trusted as independent.[29]

The study of a later antiquity, however, served the cause of the Church of England much better. The devotion of early modern Christianity to its ancient past, in the case of the late 17th century Church of England, manifested itself not merely in scholarship, but also in pastoral practise. Pastoral reformers, such as Anthony Horneck, were supported by scholars such as Cave, in efforts to recreate the moral and spiritual life of the Christians of antiquity in contemporary England. Dodwell much approved of this; but his own concerns seem to have originated in controversy and moved no further from doctrinal matters than was necessitated by concern with the moral dimensions of the political and ecclesiastical situation created by the successful Dutch invasion. His early attack on the Dissenters, the *Separation of Churches from Episcopal Government*, was dismissed by Richard Baxter as an inadequate dabbling in the controversy already handled by such theological luminaries as Gisbert Voetius and Cornelius Jansen.[30] Though the work was to

[26] C.D.A. Leighton, "'Knowledge of Divine Things:' A Study of Hutchinsonianism," *History of European Ideas* 26 (2000): pp. 159–175.

[27] John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), part 1.

[28] See Levine, *Dr. Woodward's Shield*, chaps. 2 and 3, and James E. Force, *William Whiston: Honest Newtonian* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), chap. 2.

[29] Henry Dodwell, *A Discourse concerning Sanchoniathon's Phoenician History* (London: B[enjamin] Tooke, 1681), pp. 115–118.

[30] Richard Baxter, *The True and Only Way of Concord of All the Christian Churches…* (London: John Hancock, 1680), 2nd pagination, p. 74.

serve its controversial purpose well for some decades, Dodwell was, even as he finished it, dissatisfied with it. He resolved to bring a rigorously historical method to bear on the old theological dispute between presbytery and prelacy and exhibit it, with a Latin text, to the learned world. His historical, as opposed to 'rational' treatment of the topic of schism was never published.[31] However, he was not, in any of his later controversies, to deviate from his adherence to a historical method.

The extent and depth of this adherence may be judged from the whole corpus of Dodwell's writings. However, at an early point in his career, in a work undertaken for the benefit of Charles Leslie's brother, he depicted, briefly and densely, the theology he desired to practise and sought to commend. He acknowledged the legitimacy of 'practical divinity', a term we might translate as 'pastoral theology', but did not treat of it and of 'purely rational divinity' (or natural theology), of which he was dismissive. All other divinity was designated, significantly, as 'textuary.'[32] The texts referred to were scriptural and patristic. Divinity, for the most part, consisted in the application of a rigorous historical method to the study of them. With regard to scripture, Dodwell articulated a view in the tradition stemming from Grotius, which remained generally repellent to defenders of orthodoxy. While it was, of course, to acknowledge the existence of a divine author, scholarship, in its practice, was chiefly to concern itself with the intention of the scriptural passage's human author, as he addressed an 'auditory to whose understandings he was to accommodate himself.' The kinds of learning required for such exercises were listed as historical, philological, antiquarian and patristic.[33]

If very great importance was to be ascribed to patristic study in biblical theology, the rest of Dodwell's textuary divinity, which he placed under the heading of 'school divinity', was almost reduced to this. His call for a reform of scholasticism amounted to objections to the *auctoritates* it used. They were often 'very contemptible; … heathen philosophers, or late doctors, or at the uttermost particular Fathers.' Preference was to be given to the more primitive, Greek Fathers; but even they were to be carefully examined, by a method he outlined, to ascertain the representative character of their statements. In truth, what was sought was the replacement of *auctoritates* with a single *auctoritas* — the historically reconstructed mind of the primitive church, as it articulated its received teaching. Thus Dodwell stated his methodological stance early in his scholarly career.[34] Towards the end of his life, in his participation in the conflict over Non-Conformists receiving occasional communion in churches of the Establishment, he was still articulating clearly his conviction that 'the certainest way' of resolving disputes lay in the establishing of the early church's 'principles [rather] than from naked facts.'[35] However, he can best be seen both elaborating this stance and putting it to practical use in his protracted

[31] Francis Brokesby, *The Life of Mr. Henry Dodwell …* (London: Richard Smith, 1715), 1: pp. 58–74.

[32] Dodwell, *Letters of Advice*, pp. 131–132.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 153–159. To site Dodwell's views on the interpretation of scripture within contemporary debate, see Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), pp. 447–456.

[34] Dodwell, *Letters of Advice*, pp. 147–152.

[35] Dodwell, *Occasional Communion*, p. 114.

dispute with Humphrey Hody in the 1690s, centring on the latter's use of the Baroccian Ms. Hody provoked Dodwell not only by his purpose, of demonstrating that the Non-Jurors did not possess justification for their separation in the politically motivated removal of bishops from their sees, but also by his very inadequate historical argumentation. A collection of discreet examples of apparent ecclesiastical acquiescence in episcopal deprivations, from one part of the church and a late period and without investigation of the minds of the participants in the events, would not serve to change a 'was' into an 'ought', matters of fact into principles.[36]

This conversion of 'was' into 'ought', in other words, the practice which sprang from Dodwell's *ancienneté*, was achieved by a system of thought which met various requirements. In the first place, there was a need to restrict the duration of the binding, normative past. For an indefinite duration would, as Dodwell remarked in complaining of Hody's unjustifiable selection of precedents, 'afford arguments on both sides, matters of fact against matters of fact, which can never resolve any question with regard to right and to conscience.'[37] The choice of the third century and the designation of it as 'the Cyprianic Age' was, in part, fortuitous, occasioned by controversy with Presbyterian apologists. The circumstances and pen of Cyprian of Carthage provided sources of unparalleled value for those who wished to assert the identity of the primitive and the Anglican concepts of the episcopal office.[38] The use which could be made of Cyprian's writings in anti-Catholic polemic added to contemporary appreciation of them. Dodwell himself, as his attention was claimed by the defence of the Non-Juring case and the task of undermining fashionable theological stances, found himself less involved in anti-Presbyterian controversy. However, works of his friend and disciple, Bishop John Sage, who, as a Scottish Episcopalian, had a vocation to serve in this struggle, display the original utility of the notion of the Cyprianic age.[39] The concept emerged partly by chance and, moreover, was held rather lightly, in that it was never meant to deny either medieval or post-medieval history some considerable normative role. Bishop Jeremy Collier's 19th-century editor was certainly right in pointing to belief in the inerrant, normative character of primitive Christianity as the underlying principle of his author. Yet when Collier urged the study of history on the grounds that this activity 'opens a communion with the dead and revives the ages past for the benefit of the present', he was introducing a work mostly concerned with the Christianity of the middle ages.[40]

[36] [Henry Dodwell], *A Vindication of the Deprived Bishops*… (London: n.p., 1692), pp. 11–17 and *A Defence of the Vindication of the Deprived Bishops*… (London: n.p., 1695), pp. 32–37. These works are well introduced in Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, pp. 47–51.

[37] Dodwell to George Hickes, 18 July 1691, English Letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40,785), fol. 92.

[38] The utility of these sources to anti-Presbyterian argumentation will be quickly seen from J.B. Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), chap. 4. For exemplification of the use of Cyprian in anti-Presbyterian polemic in the period before that of Dodwell, see *Κειμήλια ἐκκλησιαστικά*: *The Historical and Miscellaneous Tracts of the Reverend and Learned Peter Heylen, D.D.* (London: Charles Harper, 1681), pp. 278–289.

[39] See J[ohn] S[age], *Principles of the Cyprianic Age with regard to Episcopal Power and Jurisdiction*… ([London]: Walter Ketilby, 1695) and the *Vindication* of this work, cited above and below.

[40] Collier, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1: pp. v and lxi.

The history of the post-Reformation period too offered its guides and Dodwell himself was not unwilling to use it when controversy demanded.[41] The whole of past history might be used to determine present thought and action. The Cyprianic age, however, was essential to regulate how it was to be used.

This privileged role of the Cyprianic age needed justification. Its origins were suspiciously tendentious and its upholders confronted with plain declarations that there was no reason to accept it.[42] In beginning a reply, Dodwell and those who accepted his position offered a statement about the practicability of their method. For the first time, in the age of Cyprian, the primitive church provided the historian with ample sources to determine its principles. As Sage put it:

> It was an age that… had transmitted to posterity many excellent records… from all parts of Christendom… from which being accurately sifted, with the help of other monuments, I judge it no insuperable task to draw an intelligible scheme of the principles which then prevailed... [43]

However, it was the desirability of this historical reconstruction, rather than its mere possibility, that needed to be established. For this purpose, a complex of argumentation tending to establish continuity between the church of the apostles and that of the Cyprianic age was developed. In part, this consisted of attempts made, while emphasising the brevity of the time span under discussion, to demonstrate the conservatism and tenacity of principle which prevailed among post-apostolic Christians.[44] It also consisted of an assertion of an identity of the two ages in sanctity. The figures of the age were mostly 'singularly good men', living in a church uncorrupted by 'any tokens of favour' bestowed by the secular power, but rather bearing the 'brunt of the fiery trial' it inflicted.[45]

The crucial constituent in this assertion of identity, however, was a claim about the presence of historically verifiable supernatural phenomena in the Cyprianic age. The Fathers of the post-Apostolic age certainly possessed natural means of understanding accurately the content of the Christian religion, but they were also possessed of a *spiritus propheticus*, which bestowed on them a degree of infallibility, *usque ad tempora Constantini*.[46] Dodwell's position required the ascription of such infallibility, since the Fathers were the instruments of the communication of that part of the apostolic revelation unrecorded in scripture.[47] The espousal of this view of tradition, as revealed in the patristic texts, as a supplement to scripture left

[41] [Henry Dodwell], *The Doctrine of the Church of England, concerning the Independency of the Clergy on the Lay Power…* (London: [n.p.], 1697).

[42] See, for example, [Edward Welchman?], *A Defence of the Church of England from the Charge of Schism and Heresy…* (London: Randal Taylor, 1691). See especially p. 7.

[43] [Sage], *Vindication*, p. 16.

[44] *Ibid.*, 17–21. For a concise statement on these matters by Dodwell, see his *Vindication*, pp. 22–24.

[45] [Sage], *Vindication*, pp. 14–15.

[46] Henry Dodwell, *Dissertationes in Irenćum* (Oxford: e Theatro Sheldoniano, 1689), pp. 94–96.

[47] See, for example, Dodwell, *Occasional Communion*, pp. 17–18 and 107.

Non-Jurors and those of like mind open to accusations of adopting Popish doctrine and Dodwell was careful to state qualifications asserting scripture's primacy.[48] However, the view came to possess an ineluctable attraction for many. For it was the easiest and surest defence against those—the chief protagonists of the early English Enlightenment—whose private judgement, exercised in the interpretation of scripture, led them to question or deny Trinitarian belief.[49]

In the context of the present discussion, however, it is not the contemporary theological importance of this position of Dodwell, so much as the use made of historical study in underpinning it, that is noteworthy. The patristic teaching was to be revealed by a rigorous historical method and its authority was to be defended in the same way. The strain of apologetic developed by Leslie with reference to scripture, most notably in his *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*, and which was to rise to such pre-eminence afterwards was to be extended to enable it to encompass the patristic era. Leslie stated his contention thus:

> First, then, I suppose that the truth of the doctrine of Christ will be sufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact which are recorded of him in the gospels be true; for his miracles, if true, do vouch for the truth of what he delivered. The same is to be said as to Moses.

Leslie went on to enunciate a set of criteria which enabled discussion of the miraculous in scripture to be brought into the area of publicly verifiable, historical discourse.[50] Dodwell had already, much less concisely, placed much the same requirements on patristic revelations: they were to have been publicly made, publicly scrutinised and verified by observable miracles.[51]

Dodwell fashioned, in the ways described above, a sophisticated scholarship, intended to allow the re-creation, in part at least, of the mind of Christian antiquity. Such recreation had more than scholarly purpose. His task of recovering primitive doctrine was to be the foundation of a restored church, which would end Christian divisions and renew Christian spiritual life. This restoration would challenge the course of the history 'of modern, of barbarous, of divided ages', determined by a public mind under the influence of 'those least skilful in principles, and who are withal least presumable to act by principles.'[52] Such influence loomed large in the Non-Jurors' assessment of their own age, as they sought to account for what had happened at the time of the Great Rebellion and the Church of England's betrayal of principle at the time of the Dutch invasion.[53] There is certainly no immediately apparent reason to believe that this project and the motivation for it, which

[48] See, for example, Dodwell, *In Irenćum*, unpaginated *Prćfatio*, sect. 11, where he discusses the Fathers' acceptance of the scripture as the rule of faith.

[49] C.D.A. Leighton, "The Non-Jurors and the Counter Enlightenment: Some Illustration," *Journal of Religious History* 22: 3 (Oct., 1998): pp. 270–286.

[50] *Theological Works of the Rev. Charles Leslie* (Oxford: at the University Press, 1832), 1: pp. 11–12.

[51] Henry Dodwell, *Dissertationes Cyprianic*œ (Oxford, e Theatro Sheldoniano, 1684), pp. 53–71.

[52] Dodwell, *Vindication*, pp. 23 and 15.

[53] Leighton, "Religion of the Non-Jurors," pp. 253–255.

constituted Dodwell's *ancienneté*, were rendered substantially invalid by the scholarship which he practised. However, there is reason, in that since the Renaissance critical scholarship has indeed rendered the task of renewing the past in the present increasingly complex, to comment on the relationship between Dodwell's means and ends.

The general suggestion that there was inherent, ultimately irreconcilable conflict between the practice of critical scholarship and the desire to re-create a past age may be broken down into more specific claims. In the first place, it is claimed that the mere accumulation of scholarship by the end of the 17th century created an insurmountable barrier between the scholar and those he aspired to subject to the influence of antiquity. Thus Levine points out—and it will hardly be contested—that Dodwell's 'learning had become so cumbersome and involute as to seem almost unintelligible to the ordinary gentleman.' However, it is difficult to see why Dodwell was wrong in his belief 'that the erudition of the scholar could serve the wisdom of the gentleman without any contradiction.'[54] If appropriately mediated, it clearly could and the point remains true when then the gentleman was given the character of a Christian layman.

It is no doubt true that the inclination of the Non-Jurors to found their characteristic stances on historical erudition was a significant reason, among others, for their failure to develop into a more substantial and enduring religious movement. In this, they bear comparison with the Hutchinsonians, whose devotion to Hebrew scholarship and the history of religion deterred the spread of their views, despite a capacity for attractive, popular representation. One acquainted with the writings of the Non-Jurors and their opponents may well sympathise with a lay correspondent of Dodwell, who having laid before him his continuing communion with the regnant church as a *casus conscientiae*, declared:

> and woe be to us common Christians, if we are bound upon pain of damnation to have so great skill in antiquity as to enable us to be umpires in the controversies of learned men…[55]

However, this common Christian had made a particularly unfortunate choice of counsellor: the polemics of Leslie or the piety of Kettlewell would no doubt have served him much better than the learning of Dodwell. In any case, the matter of the schism was rather singular in the demand it made for the adaptation of recondite learning to the capacities of those merely tolerably well educated. Dodwell's simple zeal for the revival of Cyprianic antiquity, divorced from the specific question of the schism, was more easily communicated. The respected juring churchman, Nathaniel Marshall, not long after Dodwell's death, set out to present Cyprian to both lay readers and those who did 'not read Latin with perfect ease and pleasure, nor enter, without difficulty, into the spirit of an author.' In this way, patristic understandings

[54] Levine, *Battle of the Books*, p. 98.

[55] Copy of a letter from S.K. to Henry Dodwell, [early 1694?], Rawlinson Letters 68 (S.C. 14,949), p. 63, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

of Christian truth were to be introduced into the burgeoning popular print culture of the age.[56]

The assertion that, as 17th-century scholarship increasingly came to understand the inter-relationships of the phenomena of antiquity, it also grasped the impossibility of their re-animation, is a much more substantial foundation for the claim of inherent conflict between historical scholarship and the objective of restoration. However, as a criticism of Dodwell, it can only be advanced in a very limited degree. Perception of an incongruity of eras was not, it should be considered, equally likely to arise in all areas of intellectual enquiry. Attempts to apply the fruits of the historical study of Roman law in early modern society, for example, were clearly more likely to raise difficulties[57] than commendations of Greek theological thought. This was all the more true in the light of the idealist presumptions of the age about the ability of religious doctrine to determine social phenomena.[58] Moreover, the polemical purpose which constantly directed Dodwell's reconstruction of the mind of Christian antiquity should be recalled. The test of his labours is more fairly made with reference to their congruity with contemporary religious debate, rather than with the church's life in general. Those who combined scholarship with pastoral activity, such as Marshall, were perhaps more concerned with the question '[w]hether a revival of the primitive discipline may be practical' and varied in their estimation of 'how far it may be so.'[59] However, in the realm of debate, such questions might be neglected and Dodwell's stances proved enduring. It is true, no doubt, that the 18th century witnessed a decline in the practice of theologising on a foundation of patristic study for which philosophical thought supplied. Yet the kind of argumentation which such as Dodwell commended and made use of was not, for some considerable time, effectively assaulted. It was not until the late 1740s that a substantial assault was made, by Conyers Middleton, who singled out Dodwell and the most fundamental parts of his system for criticism.[60] It is noteworthy that when he did so, he was able to depict himself, albeit in self-advertisement as the heroic champion of free enquiry against 'prejudice, bigotry, and superstition', as adopting a position which 'was not only new, but contradictory to the general opinion, which prevails among Christians.'[61]

Dodwell, by virtue of the subject matter and intention of his work, was hardly susceptible to criticism on the grounds that he attempted an impossible measure of union between incongruous eras. However, in qualification, once again a distinction

[56] Nath[aniel] Marshall, *The Genuine Works of St. Cyprian, Archbishop of Carthage*… (London: W. Taylor and H. Clements, 1717), p. xiii. The immediately following pages on the significance of the Cyprianic age indicate Marshall's obligation to Dodwell.

[57] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), chap.1.

[58] Robert Pattison, *The Great Dissent: John Henry Newman and the Liberal Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991). See especially pp. 117–128.

[59] Nathaniel Marshall [A Presbyter of the Church of England, pseud.], *The Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church*… (London: W. Taylor and H. Clements: 1714), p. 222.

[60] *Miscellaneous Works of*… *Conyers Middleton, Principal Librarian of the University of Cambridge*, 2nd ed. (London: R. Manby, 1755), 1: pp. 125–127.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. iii–iv.

should be drawn between his advocacy of the Non-Juring case and his work in general. For, when engaged in the former, Dodwell was apt to forget his own methodology, abandon the search for principles and resort to demands for mere precedents, of a kind which antiquity could not possibly supply.[62] At the same time, he was most willing to point out the incongruity of eras when his opponents cited antique precedents against him.[63] However, criticism of Dodwell, in this matter, may go beyond this point. He may be generally defended against the charge of failing to take account of historical change by virtue of his desire to confine his reconstruction of the past to the use of its principles; but he appears never to have devoted attention to the question of what was to be understood by the term 'principle.' Perhaps inevitably, in view of the personal choice which the schism forced upon individuals and in view of the prominence of the mind of the canonist in discussion of it, Dodwell's principles were as often moral or canonical as doctrinal. The heat of controversy prevented him from distinguishing these with any degree of clarity. Since doctrine is, at least, less conditioned by external circumstances, Dodwell will appear to the modern observer, who seeks principles extractable from contemporary polemic in the writings of the learned Non-Juror, to have been at his best in the doctrinal insights he obtained from his patristic studies.[64]

In brief, it cannot be held that the scholarship of his age, of which Dodwell was so distinguished a practitioner, rendered, in general, that particular revivification of the past which he sought impossible in the eyes of contemporaries. He had effected the essential adaptation necessary to avoid this in his adoption of the historical method spoken of in this essay in preference to patristic modes of theologising. If this is all that is meant by asserting an inherent contradiction between scholarship such as his and the revival of the mind of antiquity, the point can be accepted without dispute. Dodwell showed considerable embarrassment when he was obliged to speak of 'that unaccurate way of arguing which generally prevailed among' the Fathers.[65] Their analogical methods were too close to those of the enthusiasts, hostility to whom had so shaped his mind and the tradition of learning in which he stood.[66] When reminded of this similarity, he was quite clear about the need to leave this element of the past behind.[67] It may be, however, that this commitment to his own age, while

[62] See, for example, his comments on the behaviour of Bishop Stillingfleet with regard to Non-Jurors in Dodwell to …, 7 Jan. 1693, English Letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40,785), fol. 93r.

[63] See, for example, a copy of a letter from Henry Dodwell to [William Lloyd], bishop elect of Coventry and Lichfield, [1692], Rawlinson Letters 68 (S.C. 14,949), p. 47.

[64] Dodwell's placing of discussion of Christian immortality in relation to sacramental theology, with constant advertence to the concept of *theosis*, may serve as an example. See, for indication of particular patristic influences, Henry Dodwell, *An Epistolary Discourse Proving from the Scriptures and the First Fathers that the Soul is a Principle Naturally Mortal…* (London: R. Smith, 1706), pp. 31–92. Also noteworthy is Dodwell's exposition of a theology of martyrdom, equally founded on the concept of *theosis*. See Dodwell, *Dissertationes Cyprianicć*, chaps. 11–13.

[65] Dodwell, *Letters of Advice*, p. 159.

[66] For a discussion of the rejection of the use of analogy in the period, see Brian Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity: The Rejection of Occult Symbolism, 1580–1680," in Brian Vickers, ed., *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 95–163.

[67] Dodwell, *In Irenœum*, unpaginated *Præfatio*, sect. 16.

understandable and necessary in some degree, was a more zealous compromise of his *ancienneté* than his age or the following one, still much given to analogical modes of thought, truly demanded. It was left to the other members of the Trinity College, Dublin, more inclined to the practise of philosophy, to demonstrate by their influence, which endured into the 19th century, that Dodwell was precipitate and over zealous in his rejection of the analogical methods of the ancients, to whom he was otherwise so devoted.[68]

[68] See above, p. 7 of this article, paragraph 1.