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***JOHN KENRICK AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF  
UNITARIAN THOUGHT***

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a study in the history of ideas which discusses the work and thought of the Unitarian biblical critic, classical historian and philologist John Kenrick (1788-1877). It examines evidence to suggest that during his productive life Kenrick made an intellectual transition from the ideas of the radical English Enlightenment to the more Romantic perspectives of the nineteenth century. The first part of the discussion as a whole is concerned largely with the nature of the context from which Kenrick emerged as a thinker while the second is related to Kenrick's own changing ideas. Chapter two reveals the monist philosophical and theological tendencies which supported the Socinian beliefs of the polymath Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), who was the dominant influence on Unitarians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This discussion of Priestley's thought, which is brought into relief by means of a comparison with that of the moral and political philosopher Richard Price (1723-1791), has two objectives, the first to reveal something of the context of Unitarianism of the time and the second to establish a foundation from which the nature and extent of later intellectual change may be measured.

Chapter three concentrates on another aspect of the Unitarian context closely connected to Socinian beliefs, and that is the tradition of historical biblical criticism which contained the seeds of a new historical consciousness. The fourth

chapter is an analysis of the relationship between these radical Unitarian biblical critics and scholars in Germany and discusses some similarities and differences between the two sets of thinkers. Chapter five focuses upon John Kenrick himself and the integration of his Unitarian historical biblical ideas with elements of German thought on the interpretation of classical myth. It points out the implications for his own ideas in terms of the development of Romanticism and cultural relativism. Chapter six is concerned with Kenrick's historical approach to language and shows how it may be compared with the ideas of the German philologists of the time.

The seventh chapter is an account of Kenrick's opinions on the truth of Genesis and the origins of man. It considers in what ways the uneasy relationship between theology and the science of the mid-nineteenth century helped to bring about changes in his thought which linked it to a transformed Unitarianism and also to the intellectual milieu of the later nineteenth century. Chapter eight concludes the thesis with an assessment of the nature and extent of the changes which had taken place since the domination of the ideas of Joseph Priestley. The thesis offers a study of the transition in thought of an eminent scholar whose work has never been examined before. It opens up some new perspectives with regard to the linkages between the radical English Enlightenment and the historical consciousness and Romanticism of the nineteenth century.

## PREFACE

The proposal that I should embark on a thesis related to the history of ideas was made on the completion of my undergraduate degree as a mature student at the University of Stirling. I had written my final-year dissertation on the work of the late nineteenth-century idealist philosopher Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) and decided that I should like to take on the challenge of another topic in the same field. It was suggested that the subject of Unitarianism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries might prove a fruitful area in which to pin down a topic for research. The idea was to find a way to compare aspects of Unitarianism's earlier dry rationalism to the more Romantic ideas of its later adherents. After many months of study in the fields of philosophy and theology and more than a few 'dead ends', I decided to look closely at the work of the Unitarian historian and philologist John Kenrick (1788-1877) in the hope that I might find evidence of an intellectual transition. The following thesis is the result of that research, the early period of which was assisted by a grant from the Carnegie Trust.

Without the patience, encouragement and enthusiasm of my supervisor, Professor David Bebbington, this thesis would never have been completed. Professor Bebbington has been generous with his superior skills and profound insight into a complex topic and he must have despaired many times of my

wandering thoughts and the various intellectual *cul de sacs* in which I found myself. He has also shown me great kindness during difficult times, when my husband's illnesses threatened to make me despair of ever reaching a conclusion to my research and writing. The debt I owe to him is one which may be expressed in the simplest of ways. Quite frankly, I am absolutely certain beyond any doubt that without his kindness, understanding and encouragement, I would never have made it. His keen eye having scrutinised this text on many occasions it only remains for me to say that any errors it contains are entirely my own.

I also owe a great deal to others in the academic world, most notably my good friend Dr Martin Fitzpatrick in Aberystwyth, whose unfailing support, advice, sense of humour and generous book-lending have contributed so much to the end result here. Dr Fitzpatrick's former co-editor on the journal *Enlightenment and Dissent*, Dr D.O. Thomas, was also one of the 'great and good' in that wonderful Welsh town. Sadly, Dr Thomas, or 'D.O.' as he was fondly known, died last year. Despite her bereavement, his widow Beryl Thomas was kind enough to help me with her transcription of a portion of John Kenrick's shorthand, which appears in the Appendix to the thesis. I should like to express my gratitude to Beryl for her willingness to help at such a difficult time and also for all her hard work. I am also indebted to Dr David Wykes, Director of Dr Williams's Library in London, who has also been a valuable source of encouragement over the years. He has shown great interest in this thesis and single-handedly persuaded the library trustees to allow part of the Kenrick Papers collection to be transported to

the care of Stirling University Library for a large part of the research period. This, I believe, was the very first time in the library's history that permission had been given to allow manuscripts to leave the premises in Gordon Square. I am very grateful to Dr Wykes and the trustees for this privilege. Not only that, but at Dr Williams's Library I was permitted to record a great deal of manuscript material relating to John Kenrick on digital camera. As I live far from London, this was of enormous assistance in the compilation of the thesis. I am aware that in this too I was greatly privileged, for I believe the use of new technology in this way was also a 'first' for Dr Williams's.

For much assistance and information on the foreign publications of works of Joseph Priestley I am indebted to John Stephens, of Waterfields antiquarian bookshop in Oxford. John, sadly, died earlier this year, but I am sure that his enthusiasm, generosity of spirit and encouraging ways live on in all who knew him. My thanks must go also to Andrew Hill of the Unitarian Historical Society, who was generous with his advice, bibliographies and his book lending.

I am grateful also to Sue Killoran and Joyce Meakin at the library of Harris Manchester College in Oxford. These two wonderful ladies I shall remember with great fondness, for their amazing expertise in librarianship is matched only by their sense of humour! I should also like to mention the kindness of Ian Flett and his colleagues at Dundee Archives. They have the distinction of keeping the northernmost copies of the First Series of the *Monthly Repository* (1806-1826), to which I was allowed unlimited access, thus eliminating the need for many trips to Manchester.

To Mrs Anne Kenrick, of Edgbaston, Birmingham, I am grateful for a peek at the family papers, which revealed some interesting facts about the life of an older John Kenrick, circa 1850. Despite suffering a terminal illness, Mrs Kenrick's husband, Hugh Kenrick, was insistent that I visit their home to see the papers. I shall always remember his brave demeanour, sense of humour and his interest in the thesis.

My thanks must also go to my friends and neighbours who have been staunch and supportive throughout all the tribulations of the last few years. They are Alison Brown on our much-loved Isle of Tiree, Tom and Margaret Brown, Jennifer and Bud Cook, Michael and Betty Gent, Elma and Grant Lindsay, Marian Pallister, David and Sheila Rhodes, Heather and Bob Wallace and Pam, and in Germany, my young friend Dr Silke Strickrodt, who was correct to tell me on one memorable occasion that I should 'get some order into my life'.

Much gratitude goes to my friend Patricia Meldrum, a fellow mature student who graduated with her PhD in history last year. Pat and her husband John have also faced the efforts of research and the burdens of putting it all together in a coherent form. They were always well aware of all the pitfalls, and their advice, prayers and encouragement have been beyond price.

Most of all, however, my thanks goes to my husband Alan. During his illnesses of the last three years he has never given me anything but support and encouragement to finish the thesis. Throughout all the hospital visits, treatments and, finally, the life-saving operation, his courage and stoicism always put my weaknesses to shame. My own many days and nights struggling at the computer

in despair were nothing in comparison to the sufferings he has endured over the years. Without him I should have been lost and it is to my dear Alan and his kind, generous – if sometimes rather unreliable – heart, that I dedicate this thesis.

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**A note on usage. During the historical period to which this thesis relates, the vast majority of writers were male. Writers of the period commonly used gendered language, for example ‘man of the people’, and in doing so reflected the language of the age. For this reason I have decided to avoid following modern politically correct usages. \***

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\* My sincere thanks to Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. x.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter 1 : Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2 : The Radical Intellectual Background: A Divided Legacy</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Chapter 3 : Reason, Religion and the Origins of the Historical Jesus</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Chapter 4 : Unitarians and Germans</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Chapter 5 : Roads to History 1 : The Bible, Myth and History</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Chapter 6 : Roads to History 2 : Language, Literature and History</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>Chapter 7 : The Origins of Man, Science and Religion</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>Chapter 8 : Conclusion</b>	<b>408</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>423</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>434</b>

## ABBREVIATIONS

### Journals

<b>AHR</b>	<b><i>American Historical Review</i></b>
<b>AMB</b>	<b><i>Ambix</i></b>
<b>APSR</b>	<b><i>American Political Science Review</i></b>
<b>CR</b>	<b><i>Christian Reformer</i></b>
<b>CT</b>	<b><i>Christian Teacher</i></b>
<b>ED</b>	<b><i>Enlightenment and Dissent</i></b>
<b>ER</b>	<b><i>Edinburgh Review</i></b>
<b>HJ</b>	<b><i>Historical Journal</i></b>
<b>HPT</b>	<b><i>History of Political Thought</i></b>
<b>HSPS</b>	<b><i>Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences</i></b>
<b>HT</b>	<b><i>History and Theory</i></b>
<b>JHI</b>	<b><i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i></b>
<b>JMH</b>	<b><i>Journal of Modern History</i></b>
<b>JSH</b>	<b><i>Journal of Social History</i></b>
<b>MR</b>	<b><i>Monthly Repository</i></b>
<b>PD</b>	<b><i>Paradigm : Journal of the Textbook Colloquium</i></b>
<b>PM</b>	<b><i>Philological Museum</i></b>
<b>PPN</b>	<b><i>Price-Priestley Newsletter</i></b>
<b>PR</b>	<b><i>Prospective Review</i></b>
<b>SH</b>	<b><i>Social History</i></b>
<b>SJT</b>	<b><i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i></b>
<b>TR</b>	<b><i>Theological Review</i></b>
<b>TUHS</b>	<b><i>Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society</i></b>
<b>WR</b>	<b><i>Westminster Review</i></b>
<b>WTJ</b>	<b><i>Westminster Theological Journal</i></b>

## **Libraries**

<b>DWL</b>	<b>Dr Williams's Library</b>
<b>GUL</b>	<b>Glasgow University Library</b>
<b>HMCL</b>	<b>Harris Manchester College Library</b>
<b>JRUL</b>	<b>John Rylands University Library</b>
<b>NLS</b>	<b>National Library of Scotland</b>
<b>UCL</b>	<b>University College, London.</b>

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1851 a cousin of the classical historian John Kenrick made a very brief note in her diary about a visit by him to her family in London and also of a trip to ‘the Exhibition’ on 12 May.<sup>1</sup> Like six million others in Britain, Kenrick, who was aged sixty- three at the time, would not only have witnessed at the Crystal Palace the spectacular pumps and steam engines of the Industrial Revolution, but also would have wondered at the crafts, artefacts and exhibits sent by many different races of the world. One unforgettable lesson of the Great Exhibition of 1851<sup>2</sup> was that there was little uniformity to humankind. Instead, there existed an amazing diversity of people, not all of whom had advanced in terms of ‘civilisation’ at the same pace.

All the exhibits, from the stuffed Indian elephant accompanied by human figures given to Queen Victoria by the Nazim of Moorshedabad, to the primitive raffia mats gifted to the exhibition by the Queen of Tahiti,<sup>3</sup> would have appeared to Kenrick as physical proof of the sheer scope and breadth of human diversity. The fact of an amazing variety of peoples throughout the world had given force to the arguments about the origins of man in his work *An Essay on Primæval*

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<sup>1</sup> The visit was recorded in the diaries of the long-lived Rebecca Kenrick (1799-1889) which are contained in private family papers owned by Mrs Anne Kenrick, of Edgbaston, Birmingham. Mrs Kenrick is the widow of Mr Hugh Kenrick, a descendant of a brother of John Kenrick. I was very privileged to be allowed to see Rebecca Kenrick’s diaries just days before Mr Hugh Kenrick’s death in Birmingham in 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The Great Exhibition opened at the Crystal Palace on 1 May 1851 and closed on 11 October that same year. There were almost eight miles of display tables, many showing exhibits from ‘civilised’ nations, but others offering artefacts from the European colonies.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987), pp. 2, 3.

*History*, published five years previously.<sup>4</sup> For John Kenrick and others the Great Exhibition revealed evidence of a lack of uniformity in humankind and showed instead the diversity of races and groups of men.<sup>5</sup> It emphasised in a practical and colourful way a multi-faceted perspective on mankind which seemed far removed from Enlightenment ideas on the unity of humanity and a uniform march of progress towards civilisation and perfection. Instead, it served as an illustration of the uniqueness of cultures and a form of development of mankind which was more characteristic of views formulated in the Romantic Age.

It is with these and other ideas in mind that this thesis will explore and discuss the work and thought of the classical historian and philologist John Kenrick with regard to the nature of his transition from Enlightenment to Romantic thought. Kenrick was born in Exeter on 4 February 1788 and died in York on 7 May 1877, aged eighty-nine. He was a Rational Dissenter and a Unitarian who during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century was regarded as the most eminent scholar of his denomination. As a child he was taught by the Dissenting minister and classical scholar Charles Lloyd (1766-1829) and at age twelve he was admitted as a student for the ministry to the Dissenting Academy at Exeter which was run by Kenrick's father, Timothy Kenrick (1759-1804), a scholar and biblical critic.

Timothy Kenrick ran the academy with the help of Joseph Bretland (1742-1819) until his own death in 1804, and a year after that it was closed. The young John Kenrick received part of his early education there, and heard lectures given

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<sup>4</sup> John Kenrick, *An Essay on Primæval History* (London, 1846).

<sup>5</sup> See chapter seven, below.

by his father and Bretland on Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Bretland also taught history and Timothy Kenrick lectured on metaphysics, morals and logic and on theology, Jewish antiquities, ecclesiastical history and critical assessments of the New Testament. The library, which had been inherited from the previous academy, contained almost two thousand books on philosophy, theology, history, geography, natural philosophy and many other subjects. It also had many works by writers of the Dissenting tradition and volumes by foreign authors, mainly French and a very few German. The German works on the list were by the orientalist J.D. Michaelis, Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), who was one of the first to treat the New Testament critically, and Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1694-1755), the ecclesiastical historian whose work was consulted by Joseph Priestley.<sup>6</sup>

Kenrick attended Glasgow College for three years from 1807 and graduated in May 1810 not only with distinctions in logic, ethics and natural philosophy, but also with a deeper knowledge of classical thought which had been acquired in the private Greek classes of Professor John Young. After leaving Glasgow he accepted the offer of a tutorship in classics, history and literature at Manchester College in York. In 1840, when the college was moved from York to Manchester he was appointed professor of history and kept this chair until 1850. He retained a close association with the college until his death in 1877. A sensitive and perceptive account of Kenrick's life is given in a memoir of the historian written by the Unitarian theologian James Martineau (1805-1900).

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<sup>6</sup> Exeter College Library List, Harris Manchester College Library, Oxford, MS. MNC Misc 4. For the influence of Mosheim on Priestley, see chapter four below.

Martineau clearly had great admiration for Kenrick's intellectual abilities and described his history lectures as 'models of selection, compression and proportion' which presented a concrete play of incident and balance of passions 'but never led, by any dazzling generalization, to weave the true events into a false drama of the past'.<sup>7</sup>

Kenrick is an important subject for study in the history of ideas of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for a number of reasons. Firstly, he was a Rational Dissenter and Unitarian, which meant that he was part of an elite tradition of intellectual radicalism, free-thinking in theology and open to new ideas. The denomination was small, but its intellectual influence was significant and much greater than its size would suggest. Stephen Prickett remarks that at the end of the eighteenth century the Unitarians constituted an intellectual elite amongst Nonconformity and that the Dissenting Academy at Warrington was probably academically superior to both Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>8</sup>

Unitarianism emerged from the old English Presbyterian congregations as a radical, anti-Trinitarian force whose ranks were composed of liberal thinkers.<sup>9</sup> However, significant doctrinal change within Presbyterian chapels was accompanied by a dramatic decline in their numbers, and by 1800 there were only about 200 of them in England. One explanation of this is that the typical

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<sup>7</sup> James Martineau, *In Memoriam : John Kenrick* (London, 1877), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Prickett, 'The Religious Context', in Stephen Prickett (ed.), *The Romantics* (London, 1981), pp. 119-120.

<sup>9</sup> Three histories of Unitarianism are worth some study. There is an older, but very comprehensive account by Earl Morse Wilbur entitled *A History of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England and America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952). A much more recent study is by Leonard Smith, *The Unitarians, A Short History* (Arnside, Cumbria, 2006). Both of these feature the early Unitarianism in Poland and Transylvania. Also of value is the work by C. Gordon Bolam, Jeremy Goring, H.L. Short and Roger Thomas, entitled *The English Presbyterians : From Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London, 1968).

Presbyterian chapel maintained lax attitudes to membership which served to hasten the decline in numbers.<sup>10</sup>

Another factor which undermined the success of the Presbyterians and later the Unitarians as a denomination was the dynamic of inclusion. In the early decades of the eighteenth century Presbyterians had become very open to heterodox opinion. In 1756, for example, the Arminian John Taylor, when opening a new chapel in Norwich, said ' We are Christians and only Christians ... We disown all connection, except that of love and goodwill, with any sect or party whatsoever'.<sup>11</sup> This practice of inclusion was related in particular to the belief of the seventeenth-century theologian Richard Baxter that in order to exert influence on an individual that person must be *inside* rather than *outside* the movement. Baxter acknowledged the legitimacy of different faiths, including Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> A century later the policy of inclusion developed under the mantle of Enlightenment reason and liberalised doctrinal discourse to encourage belief in a simple faith founded upon a rational interpretation of the scriptures. However, although this 'catch all' principle of Presbyterianism-Unitarianism weakened the denomination's sense of communal religious identity, it transformed it into a depository of diverse opinion.

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<sup>10</sup> Alan Sell, *Dissenting Thought and the Life of the Churches* (San Francisco, 1990), p. 151. For a short but very useful account of the emergence of Rational Dissent and Unitarianism, see R.K. Webb, 'The Emergence of Rational Dissent', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> John Taylor quoted in John Seed, 'Theologies of Power : Unitarianism and the Social Relations of Religious Discourse, 1800-1850, in R.J. Morris (ed.), *Class, Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth Century Towns* (Leicester, 1986), p. 115. This remark of Taylor's is also quoted in J. Drummond and C.B. Upton, *Life and Letters of James Martineau* (London, 1902), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Raymond Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* (London, 1938), pp. 292-294.



However, if the dynamics of inclusion worked against Unitarianism as a denomination, they functioned in a beneficial way for Unitarianism as an intellectual movement. Unitarianism, which in the late eighteenth century was still illegal, may not have established a recognisable niche within the theological clutter in England, but it did form an intellectual microcosm endowed with radical and innovative ideas which was to spread far beyond the limited denominational boundaries over the next century. Evidence of this may be found in the first series of the Unitarian journal *The Monthly Repository*, published from 1806 till 1826.<sup>13</sup> The columns of the journal were packed with opinion on topics in theology, literature, politics and biblical criticism and were open to contributors from all sides of whatever controversy happened to be raging at the time.<sup>14</sup> John Kenrick, as part of all this ferment, had access to the most innovative theological ideas of his age and to an intellectual milieu which was not afraid to express opinion and initiate inquiry.

The most effective instruments in the dissemination of the radical ideas of Rational Dissent in the second half of the eighteenth century were the Dissenting academies,<sup>15</sup> which welcomed not only students for the ministry but the lay scholars on whom the academies depended so much financially. The principles

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<sup>13</sup> A full set of the first series of the *Monthly Repository* may be found in Dr Williams's Library in London. The northernmost set of this early series is held by the City Archives in Dundee.

<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the journal and its contents, the only one ever written, see Francis E. Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent, The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944).

<sup>15</sup> An analysis of the Dissenting academies was published in 1931. See Herbert McLachlan, *English Education Under the Test Acts* (Manchester, 1931). See also Alexander Gordon, 'Early Nonconformity and Education', in Alexander Gordon, *Addresses Biographical and Historical* (London, 1922), pp. 67-89. For more recent comment see Martin Fitzpatrick, 'This Candid and Liberal Method: The Teaching of Philosophy in the Liberal Dissenting Academies of the Late Eighteenth Century in England', in Colin R. Richmond and Isobel M. Harvey (eds), *Recognition: Essays Presented to Edmund Fryde* (Aberystwyth, 1996), and also David Wykes, 'The Contribution of the Dissenting Academy to the Emergence of Rational Dissent', in Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion*.

of the academies were founded upon free inquiry and the open discussion of theology and all other topics on the curriculum. These included classics, history, geography, chronology, mathematics, morals, ecclesiastical history and biblical criticism, to name only a few of the wide and varied number of subjects.

It was the theologian and teacher Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) who initiated the liberal teaching methods which were to guide the intellects of the Dissenters and their successors. His method was to present all sides of the argument and then leave students to make up their minds about which was the most persuasive. This form of teaching was carried into the latter decades of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth by two close relatives of John Kenrick. It was readily adopted at the Daventry and Hackney academies by Thomas Belsham (1750-1829) , who later became John Kenrick's step-uncle, and later by John Kenrick's own father Timothy Kenrick at the Exeter academy attended by his son from 1800. Thus from early in his life, John Kenrick had been fully acquainted with the frame of mind of Rational Dissent, which was one of free inquiry, open discussion and a form of learning based upon the most liberal principles. His approach to scholarship was open-minded and highly susceptible to any new ideas which would support his radical theological position.

In general terms, Rational Dissent and Unitarianism were important manifestations of a strain of rational Enlightenment thought which carried new ideas in theology and philosophy all the way from the era of John Locke to the early decades of the nineteenth century and beyond.<sup>16</sup> John Kenrick's early

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<sup>16</sup> The value of the tradition of Rational Dissent-Unitarianism and the liberal thought it produced has never received the recognition it deserves. Unitarians have written about Unitarians, it is true, and one of the

intellectual life was part of this tradition. It had been dominated also to a great extent by the archetypal English Enlightenment figure, the polymath Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), whose Socinianism was adopted by many who followed him, including Belsham, Timothy Kenrick and John Kenrick himself. Priestley's religious position was integrated with both his natural philosophy and his materialistic necessitarian and associationist ideas, many of which had been founded upon the work of the philosopher David Hartley (1705-1757). Priestley's great synthesis of philosophy, natural philosophy and theology was a unique form of thought which underpinned his attempts to prove the simple humanity of Christ and to undermine other 'irrational' orthodox doctrines, such as the atonement.

Chapter two of this thesis consists of a comparison between the ideas of the Socinian Joseph Priestley and those of his friend and fellow radical thinker, Richard Price (1723-1791), who was an Arian in theology. Price, of course, was the mathematician and moral philosopher who supported the French Revolution in a sermon entitled *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* in 1789, to which Edmund Burke replied in his famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

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finest examples of this is the work of the biographer Alexander Gordon, *Addresses Biographical and Historical*. A more recent example is Dennis G. Wigmore-Beddoes' *Yesterday's Radicals: A Study of the Affinity Between Unitarianism and Broad Church Anglicanism in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1971). Aspects of Rational Dissent are explored in Haakonssen (ed.) *Enlightenment and Religion*. In addition, later Unitarians have been viewed in social, political and cultural terms. See John Seed, 'Gentlemen Dissenters : the Social and Political Meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s', *HJ*, 28, 2, 1985, pp. 299-325. See also John Seed, 'Unitarianism, political economy and the antinomies of liberal culture in Manchester, 1830-1850', *SH*, vol. 7, Number 1, January 1982, pp.1-25. Also valuable is Howard Wach, 'Unitarian Philanthropy and Cultural Hegemony in Comparative Perspective: Manchester and Boston, 1827-1848', *JSH*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1993, pp. 539-557. Although perspectives such as these are useful, there has been little written on the 'bigger picture' of the contribution of Unitarianism to philosophical and religious change.

The objective of this analysis is to bring into relief the originality of Priestley's thought, which forms a distinctive reference point in relation to changes in Unitarianism over the following decades. By comparing Priestley's monism with aspects of the dualism of Richard Price, Priestley's thought is highlighted in a way which has never been attempted before. Much has been written about Priestley and Price, and some aspects of them have been evaluated in comparative terms,<sup>17</sup> but there has never been a holistic comparison of their respective frames of mind. The depth and completeness of Priestley's monism ought to be understood, for it pervades every area of his thought. It encompasses his theology, his philosophy of determinism, the nature of moral knowledge, the physical world and the nature of matter and, finally, his political system. The objective here is to expound Priestley's monist synthesis in opposition to Price's dualism as a foil, in order to bring to light the extent of the fundamental differences between the two frames of mind. It is not Price's position, but Priestley's great synthesis of God, man and nature which identifies the point from which intellectual change within the Unitarian movement over the next three or four decades may be measured. Also, in philosophical terms, it was the opposing position to that of the dualism adopted by John Kenrick at the culmination of his own intellectual journey.

In the latter decades of the eighteenth century Priestley's theological position dominated Unitarianism. However, by the 1830s and 1840s Priestley's monism, necessitarianism and dry rationalism were challenged by the Unitarian

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<sup>17</sup> See chapter two below. See also the journals devoted largely to these two thinkers, the *Price-Priestley Newsletter* (1977–1980) and *Enlightenment and Dissent* (1982–2002). See also chapter two, below.

theologian James Martineau, who argued for a more spiritual form of faith incorporating individualism, the soul and emotion. Martineau had been influenced by Coleridge and Kant and returned to a dualist perspective in terms of religious belief and a more Romantic sense of the role of feeling in the worship of God.<sup>18</sup>

Priestley's singular frame of mind underpinned his theology and also his desire to prove its validity historically, and this served as an important motivation for a more intensive use by Socinians of a rational form of historical biblical criticism. This method employed in the interpretation of scripture marked the scholars of Rational Dissent as Enlightenment thinkers who were continuing an approach to scripture which had been in many ways inspired by John Locke. These radical scholars moulded a tradition of scriptural interpretation which filtered its way down through the eighteenth century until it was consolidated by Joseph Priestley in his work *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, which was first published in 1782.<sup>19</sup>

John Kenrick is important also in this context, for from an early age he provided a major contribution to this Enlightenment tradition of historical biblical scholarship. In chapter three an attempt is made to outline some aspects of the tradition of Socinian historical biblical criticism carried down through the eighteenth century by scholars such as Nathaniel Lardner (1684-1768). Little has

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<sup>18</sup> The best analysis of Martineau's transition from the older form of Unitarianism to a new spirituality is by Ralph Waller. See 'James Martineau : The Development of his Religious Thought' , in Barbara Smith (ed.), *"Truth, Liberty and Religion": Essays Celebrating 200 Years of Manchester College* (Oxford, 1986). See also Ralph Waller, 'James Martineau : His Emergence as a Theologian, His Christology, and his Doctrine of the Church, with Some Unpublished Papers', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1986. For a comprehensive biography see J. Estlin Carpenter, *James Martineau, Theologian and Teacher: A Study of his Life and Thought* (London, 1905).

<sup>19</sup> The edition of Joseph Priestley's *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* which is cited throughout this thesis is the one which was published by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in London in 1871.

been noted even by Unitarian writers about this tradition and its implications for religious thought in England. It rejected the orthodox idea of plenary inspiration and attempted to rationalise by historical interpretation the truth of the scriptures. It employed a rational, historical method in which Christ emerged as a 'humanised' historical figure in accordance with the Socinian belief in his simple humanity. Kenrick's involvement in this particular mode of interpretation, which tried to unravel the origins of a simple Christian faith unspoiled by centuries of dogma and 'corruptions', marked him as a rational Enlightenment scholar in the Socinian mould. It also showed his participation in a form of historical interpretation of the scriptures which contained within it the seeds of a new historical consciousness.

Kenrick's importance as a radical scholar is further emphasised by the fact that he was open to the influence of German thought. The cross-current of ideas between German critics and the radical English biblical scholars, including Kenrick, is discussed in chapter four. Although the subject has not gone entirely unnoticed, there has been virtually no research done on the relationship between these two sets of radical biblical critics, English and German, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There was a significant exchange of ideas between the two, evidence for which may be seen in the early series of the *Monthly Repository* and also in articles by John Kenrick himself over the early decades of the nineteenth century. Some writers have touched upon the subject with regard to the Unitarian involvement,<sup>20</sup> but there has never been a study to

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<sup>20</sup> See John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century : England and Germany*

assess the nature of the cross-fertilisation of ideas and the motivation for the affinity between the two sets of thinkers. This seems strange, for John Rogerson, for example, has emphasised that acquaintance with German Old Testament criticism in England, which could be traced back to the 1790s and possibly even further was 'at its deepest and keenest in the Unitarian circles'.<sup>21</sup> Despite this recognition of the importance of the connection, however, the theme is never developed in his work, and as with other brief accounts of Unitarian criticism either on its own terms or in connection with German writers, it is either marginalised or virtually ignored.

John Kenrick was uniquely equipped to engage with the ideas of German scholars. As a teenager, he was taught German by the eccentric writer and composer, Thomas Foster Barham (1766-1844), and went on to become an expert in the language by the time he studied in Göttingen and Berlin in 1819-1820. Kenrick's engagement with the ideas of German critics such as the orientalist J.D. Michaelis (1717-1791), the theologian and pioneer of historical criticism J.S. Semler (1725-1791) and the later writer J.G. Eichhorn (1752-1827), meant that he was in touch with a historical method in relation to the scriptures which was radical and innovative, and indeed very like that of the Socinian critics.

Not only that, but the German Enlightenment movement in historical biblical criticism has been regarded by some historians of recent years as laying

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(London, 1984), E.S. Shaffer, *'Kubla Khan' and the Fall of Jerusalem : The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature 1770-1880* (Cambridge, 1972) and Frida Knight, *University Rebel: The Life of William Frend 1757-1841* (London, 1971). For essays which take a more general view but do not mention the Unitarian factor, see S.W. Sykes (ed.), *England and Germany. Studies in Theological Diplomacy* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, p. 158.

some of the foundations for the German historicist consciousness of the nineteenth century. This was shown by Peter Hanns Reill in his analysis of these lesser-known German scholars<sup>22</sup> who paved the way for a rational appraisal of scripture, and whose work was a magnet for Socinians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Reill's view was that the German Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*, which began later than the English 'age of reason', had more continuities with Romanticism than had previously been imagined. These scholars, according to Reill, helped to pave the way for a sea change in historical thinking and for the formation of the kind of historicism which many feel took root in its fuller sense only in Germany. Reill argued that the German Enlightenment was not simply a poor imitation of the French or English models, but had its own particular characteristics which were not completely in intellectual opposition to the ideas of historians of the German Romantic Age.

There were many differences between the radical English scholars and the critics of Germany, and some of these are outlined in chapter four. For example, while the Germans belonged to the tradition of Pietism, the seventeenth-century religious reform movement based upon intense spiritual experience, the radical English critics followed John Locke's empiricism, and his dicta about the inherent rationality of faith as found in the scriptures. However, there were also many common factors between the two sets of scholars, both of whom wanted to save religion by their reasoned approach to historical study of scripture and its manuscripts.

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Los Angeles, 1975).



The importance of Kenrick's engagement with German thought on historical criticism was that he assimilated nevertheless some ideas of a movement in scholarship which prefigured the historicist thought of the nineteenth century in Germany.

Of equal importance with regard to German thought was the fact that Kenrick was a classical scholar and historian. It is also the case that, once again, Kenrick has been ignored by works on the history of classical studies,<sup>23</sup> despite the fact that Kenrick's two major historical works, *Ancient Egypt Under the Pharaohs* and *Phoenicia*,<sup>24</sup> were, in method and structure, of notable originality. Importantly for the development of his thought the Germans had applied the method of interpretation of classical myth to the understanding of the Old Testament. This was an interpretative journey which began with J.G. Eichhorn's thoughts on Genesis and culminated in 1835 with the publication in Germany of D.F. Strauss' *Leben Jesu* which, of course, argued that the events related in the gospels had been mythically inspired by the hopes of the Jewish people.

Consequently, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was an overlap between ideas about classical myth and those believed to have been created by writers of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts, those relating to Genesis in particular. Chapter five traces the outlines of a confluence of ideas between the historical biblical critical method of John Kenrick and German opinions regarding the interpretation of classical myth. This establishes a link between the Enlightenment thought of the radical English scholars and a more

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<sup>23</sup> He receives no mention, for example, in Frank Turner's analysis of classical studies, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> John Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt Under the Pharaohs* (London, 1850) and *Phoenicia* (London, 1855).

Romantic idea of the nature of myth and its implications for historical and cultural development.

Like almost all his contemporaries, Kenrick was steeped in the classics and also in the interpretation of the Bible. His encounter with German thought on two particular aspects of the relationship between history and myth directed the course of his intellectual development in a significant way. In this context, of the relationship between the scholars of Rational Dissent, who were Enlightenment thinkers, and the critics of the German *Aufklärung*, the work of John Kenrick is particularly important. There are no studies to date which attempt to trace continuities between these radical English biblical critics and the historical consciousness of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the integration of aspects of his thought with German reflection on the subject of myth and its relationship to historical development deserves close attention.

Myth and its contribution to the uniqueness of peoples and their cultures leads naturally to the idea of language also as a binding force on nations and communities. In his approach to the understanding of the development of language it would appear that Kenrick was influenced to a very large extent by German thought and by the ideas of the philologists he encountered during his study year in Germany in 1819-1820. The contention of chapter six is that his views of the historical nature of language complemented those he had already developed on the nature of the relationship between history and myth. Together, they consolidated ideas on cultural relativism and also on literary criticism which were related to Romantic thought. Kenrick's philological works on the grammar of

Greek and Latin <sup>25</sup> were completed in the years after his studies in Germany and were very much influenced by the method of Carl Gottlob Zumpt (1792-1849), with whom he collaborated to produce several works in English.

The value of John Kenrick's scholarship as a study of intellectual transition in the history of ideas in this period is highlighted also by the fact that from both historical and religious perspectives he engaged with the controversies initiated by the new techniques in the geological, physiological and ethnological sciences of the mid-nineteenth century. Orthodox belief in the truth of Genesis was seriously challenged by the discoveries of these disciplines. Kenrick's response to these new findings and their relationship with scripture guided him towards aspects of later nineteenth-century ideas on race and the origins of man, and also to a new approach to religious belief. Although the significance of these earlier decades with regard to the relationship between science and religion has always been overshadowed by the beginning of the Darwinian era of evolutionary biology with the publication of *Origin of Species* in 1859, they are nevertheless important. There was a great deal of controversy and diverse opinion about human origins and the development of races before Darwin's famous work was published. <sup>26</sup> This subject John Kenrick explored in his *Essay on Primæval History*, published in 1846, and in several articles which appeared a few years later. His conclusions on the subject linked his thought with racial theories of the later nineteenth century. Furthermore, his reinterpretation of the relationship

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<sup>25</sup> See bibliography.

<sup>26</sup> See Hannah Franziska Augstein, *Race: The Origins of an Idea, 1760-1850* (Bristol, 1996). Augstein provides an excellent introduction to excerpts from writers of the period on the subject of race and the origins of mankind.

between religion and science resulted in a perspective on the essence of faith which was also more in tune with later nineteenth-century thought.

The task of tracing the intellectual transition of an Enlightenment scholar who professed to an ultra-rational religious creed to his acceptance of a more Romantic form of thought is fraught with difficulties. The myriad of changing, conflicting and contrasting influences which constituted the background to his own Unitarian context were highly complex. It would seem, therefore that the best way forward in advance of the analysis is to isolate some of the key characteristics of the historical and Romantic thinking of the early nineteenth century period.

In relation to Kenrick's intellectual development there are several key themes and sets of ideas, the identification of which will be useful in the understanding of the nature of the transition of his thought. Firstly there is historicism, that form of understanding of the past and its development which was closely related to the Romantic Age, particularly in Germany. The essence of historicism was that there existed a fundamental difference between the phenomena of nature and those of human history. The abstract classificatory methods of the natural sciences were inadequate for the study of the human world, in which no historical deed may be judged by standards external to the situation in which it arises, but must be judged in terms of its own inherent values. Whatever arises in history is *per se* valuable.<sup>27</sup> Historicism implied the unique in nations and cultures, each possessing its own internal principles, and

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<sup>27</sup> Georg C. Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, Conn., 1968), pp. 5,8.

appreciated diversity, relativism and organic forms of development rather than mechanistic processes.

The second theme is what we conceive of the idea of Romanticism itself, which was more related to the productions of literature by means of individual emotion, feeling and imagination. Also to be taken into account here was that particular brand of associative English Romanticism, a compromise with empiricism, which had been derived from a synthesis and coalescence of sense impressions of the external world. Kenrick's thought interacted with elements of these themes and ideas, in some instances rejecting certain perspectives, in others accepting them in whole or in part, depending upon his own intellectual and theological position at a given time and in certain circumstances.

That frame of mind which was generally very different from the ideas of later historicists was characteristic of the radical English Enlightenment which initiated the historical scholarship in which John Kenrick was schooled. At its heart was Lockean empiricism founded on the idea of sense impressions to which was applied reason. Reason was common to all humanity and therefore all men had the power to access universal truths and the precepts of a common morality. One clear example of this comes from Joseph Priestley, who enthusiastically quoted Bolingbroke (1678-1751) as stating the view that there were certain principles and rules of life and conduct which must always be true 'because they are conformable to the invariable nature of things'.<sup>28</sup> These principles would be distinguished and collected by the historian, who would soon

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<sup>28</sup> Lord Bolingbroke, quoted from *Letters On the Study of History* (1752), letter iii, p. 53, in Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on History and General Policy* (London, 1793), p. 48.

form a general system of ethics and politics on the surest foundations 'on the trial of these principles and rules in all ages, and on the confirmation of them by universal experience'.<sup>29</sup>

In the atomistic world of the Enlightenment, society was studied as a science on the basis of supposedly self-evident truths about the common nature of man. The social order was a reflection of physical nature and because the universe was a machine, the best model for society was a mechanistic one.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the history of man, which exhibited the operations of nature and of God, was famously compared by Joseph Priestley to 'the experiments made by the air pump, the condensing engine, or electrical machine'.<sup>31</sup> Priestley saw the mechanism of history as educative and exemplary and as forming the anticipated experience which would ensure the universal, linear progress of the moral improvement of mankind towards perfection.

Thus the kind of historical thought which would have pervaded John Kenrick's very early intellectual experiences was a set of ideas which accepted uniformity in human nature, universal truths and moral laws discovered by abstract reason. This was also a mechanistic view of the world derived from the natural philosophy of the period and a perception of history as the facilitator of mankind's march along the same route towards the moral ideal. If one is allowed a mental picture of this frame of mind, it would be easy to give the mind over to such images as the separate, individual, tiny pinpoints of atoms, the sharp

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> John B. Halsted (ed.), *Romanticism* (London, 1969), p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Priestley, *Lectures on History*, p. 46.

corners and regular functions of machines and the straight, teleological lines of progress and uniformity.

Contrastingly, the concepts which encompassed the historicist position were fluid, perpetually changing and developing on their own terms. The core assumption of this Romantic view of the past was that all cultures were moulded by history and that the customs and beliefs of any group of people were the products of their own historical experience.<sup>32</sup> Nature was the source of that which was eternal and constantly recurring, whereas the world of man was in a perpetual state of motion, flux and change.<sup>33</sup> In this view, therefore, the concept of natural law and an attendant perception of the universe in terms of timeless, absolute truths were wrong.<sup>34</sup> No longer valid was the idea of a world governed by a static, abstract, universal natural law and by the mechanistic, causal processes posited by the French Enlightenment,<sup>35</sup> or indeed the machine-like concepts of the historical world presented by Joseph Priestley.<sup>36</sup>

Abstract assumptions about the universality of reason and morality were replaced by a growing appreciation of the diversity to be found within concrete historical circumstances. The historian became concerned with the realities of human experience and with actual persons, groups and particular contexts. This involved a concrete understanding of historical phenomena rather than any recourse to abstract causal explanation. It was argued that every abstraction or

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<sup>32</sup> David Bebbington, *Patterns of History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought* (Vancouver, 1990), p. 92.

<sup>33</sup> Iggers, *German Conception of History*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism : The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London, 1972), p. x. In his foreword to this volume, Isaiah Berlin gives an illuminating account of his idea of the historicist frame of mind.

<sup>36</sup> See note 30, above.

systematic pattern of thought detracted from the living reality of history and although the historian could not entirely dispense with generalisations, where they were used they had to be related to the historian's subject matter.<sup>37</sup> This approach to history was one which appreciated man's actual experiences and the triumph of the concrete over abstractions, theories and stylised conceptual patterns.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, historicist thinkers discovered the moral and cultural relativism which became a crucial feature of Romantic thought in relation to historical development.<sup>39</sup> The rejection of universal precepts meant that values arose within the circumstances of a historical situation<sup>40</sup> and had to be judged on that basis alone. Every culture or society had to be viewed as a complex of its own values<sup>41</sup> and these were different from the mores of other societies. Because each society's values were formed from within its own culture and context, such values were timebound and unique and consequently no individual or action could possibly be judged by standards which were external to that situation. Such mores had to be assessed only in terms of their worth within the context from which they had evolved<sup>42</sup> and ought to be judged on their own terms and without reference to standards which had been formulated outwith that particular society'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, *The Theory and Practice of History : Leopold von Ranke* (Indianapolis, 1973), p. xx.

<sup>38</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder : Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London, 1976), p. 151.

<sup>39</sup> Halsted (ed.), *Romanticism*, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Iggers, *German Conception of History*, p.7.

<sup>41</sup> Iggers and von Moltke, *Theory and Practice of History*, p. xx.

<sup>42</sup> Iggers, *German Conception of History*, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Iggers and von Moltke, *Theory and Practice of History*, p. xx.



Likewise Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), who was perhaps the greatest historicist mind in the practice of history,<sup>44</sup> reminded scholars to separate the study of the past as much as possible from the passions of the present.<sup>45</sup> Ranke is credited with the most famous statement in all historiography. He wrote that although history has been assigned the task of judging the past and instructing the present, all he himself wanted to accomplish as a historian was to 'show only what actually happened [wie es eigentlich gewesen]',<sup>46</sup> and in doing so he eliminated the judgemental factor from the historical analysis.

The judgement of men in past ages must take account of all the surrounding influences of period and context. As Lord Acton told his listeners at Cambridge in 1895, the times, the class from which men sprang, the schools, the preachers, all such influences must be taken into account in the historian's judgement of past ages for 'we have no common code; our moral notions are always fluid'.<sup>47</sup> Should this principle not be recognised by historians, they would find themselves guilty of judging the past by the present and for the Romantic mind that that is the prime historical fallacy.<sup>48</sup> Thus the historical ideas of the Romantic Age recognised the past in its own right and discouraged attempts to distort it from the perspective of the present.

The fluid conceptual outlines of Romantic historicism were in vivid contrast to the mechanisms of the eighteenth century English Enlightenment. Human

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<sup>44</sup> Bebbington, *Patterns of History*, p. 107.

<sup>45</sup> G.P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1967), p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494-1514*, in *Fürsten und Völker*, ed. Willy Andreas (Wiesbaden, 1957), p. 4, quoted by Leonard Krieger, *Ranke, The Meaning of History* (Chicago, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Lord Acton, *A Lecture on the Study of History* (London, 1895), p. 65.

<sup>48</sup> L. Kochan, 'The Internal Vision : Sympathy', in Anthony Thorlby (ed.), *The Romantic Movement* (London, 1966), p. 89.

activities were no longer understood in terms of static institutional structures but rather as cultures in different stages of development. Historical forms were social organisms, associations of men, each of which had its own laws of growth and its specific nature. These historical forms developed on their own unique terms and therefore could not be taken apart and reassembled like some kind of conceptual mechanism which was controlled by universal causal laws.<sup>49</sup>

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that the writings of John Kenrick revealed some aspects of this historicist frame of mind. The nature of historicism was quite different from the 'march of mind' ideas of English Enlightenment thought. However, it has been contended that historicism reached its full expression only in Germany<sup>50</sup> and that English writers had been prepared to 'assimilate its insights only in small doses'.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, historical thought in England was not completely remote from the historicist outlook. The exception to the rule<sup>52</sup> was that group of historians and Germanophiles known as the Liberal Anglicans.<sup>53</sup> Duncan Forbes identified them as a group whose sympathies lay with aspects of the historicism of the Romantic Age. This group contained thinkers such as Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), the headmaster of Rugby school, and Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), whose controversial work, *History of the Jews*,<sup>54</sup> emphasised the primitive nature of the early Jewish nation. Forbes pointed out that these writers had been influenced by Vico's

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<sup>49</sup> Isaiah Berlin, in Meinecke, *Historism*, p. ix.

<sup>50</sup> Iggers, *German Conception of History* p. 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> Bebbington, *Patterns of History*, p. 113.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>53</sup> See Duncan Forbes, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (Cambridge, 1952).

<sup>54</sup> Milman's controversial work, *History of the Jews*, was published in 1829. Its assumption was that every nation passes from an imaginative state to one of reflection, and to this the Jewish people conformed, like any other nation. See Forbes *Liberal Anglican Idea*, pp. 34-35.

philosophy of mind which had argued that each people's mental state was specific at any given moment in history, and that it altered over time.

Other important scholars among the Liberal Anglicans were Julius Charles Hare (1795-1855) and Connop Thirlwall (1797-1875). Hare's essay *Guesses at Truth*, the first part of which was published in 1827, expounded a Romantic view of historical thought which was quite startling for its time. He wrote that a historian ought to be 'much of a poet...else his narrative will be flat, fragmentary and confused'.<sup>55</sup> He added that historians were prone to write from the perspective of reason, but 'Dwelling amid abstractions, the Understanding has no eye for the rich varieties of real life, but only sees its own forms and fictions'.<sup>56</sup> It was Hare and Thirlwall who translated the *History of Rome* by B.G. Niebuhr in 1828, and who in 1832 and 1833 edited the short-lived but important journal on classical philology the *Philological Museum*, to which John Kenrick contributed three articles, including one on Vico. The Liberal Anglican thinkers were concerned with biblical criticism, the German approach to philology and its assumptions about the interdependence of thought and language, and also the historical-philological method in the understanding of the history of ancient civilisations.

At the heart of Forbes' analysis is the idea that there was a deep gulf in the early decades of the nineteenth century with regard to historical thinking between the Romantic view of the Liberal Anglicans and the approach of the work of the Utilitarians and Whigs, whom he described collectively as the

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<sup>55</sup> J.C. Hare, *Guesses at Truth*, First Series (London, 1866), p. 232.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

Rationalist historians of the eighteenth century. On the Romantic side were Arnold, Milman, Hare and Thirlwall, with their fluid, relativistic and organic perspectives which historicised the development of language, thought and morality. Their mentors were Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Niebuhr, and the Germans Leopold von Ranke and Karl Otfried Müller (1797-1840).<sup>57</sup> On the other side were Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), Henry Hallam (1777-1859), the historian of Greece George Grote (1794-1871) and Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), in whom Forbes recognised belief in the static nature of morality.<sup>58</sup> In positioning the Liberal Anglican thinkers in opposition to historians such as Macaulay, Forbes' analysis provides a good reference point for the generation of a form of thought which was not generally favoured by well known English historians.

Historicism was the historical wing of the Romantic movement, particularly the German version, and in a lesser sense the English as epitomised by the Liberal Anglicans. However, as Marilyn Butler points out, English Romanticism itself is impossible to define precisely because the term itself is, in her view, 'unsound'.<sup>59</sup> It is applied to English writers of the first quarter of the nineteenth century who did not identify themselves as Romantics, and with the exception of Coleridge, English writers did not have close contact with writers of the German Romantic school who were conscious of themselves as part of a literary

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<sup>57</sup> Duncan Forbes, *Liberal Anglican Idea*, pp. 141, 148.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>59</sup> Marilyn Butler, 'Romanticism in England', in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.) *Romanticism in National Context* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 37.

movement.<sup>60</sup> Thus in the early decades of the nineteenth century the English and German Romantic movements were, to a great extent, separate entities.

Apart from the mass of critical literature devoted to the English poets of the time, there are two other aspects of English Romanticism which deserve mention here. The first is the transition from the neo-classical to the Romantic in terms of literary appreciation and the second that form of English Romantic thought which was derived from the associative processes of Enlightenment empiricism.

The transition from neo-classical aesthetics to a very different style of criticism and appreciation of beauty came at the onset of the Romantic Age. The eighteenth century had been concerned with that form of critique based upon a search for an ideal, universal and timeless perfection in art and literature. Its foundations were in classical antiquity and it required an adherence to rigidly employed uniform standards which reflected the glories of the ancient world.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to the universal norms and correct standards of taste presented to the critic by neo-classicism, the Romantic theorists offered a new emphasis on the unique, the particular and that which was historically 'localised', its characteristics related to time and place.<sup>62</sup> Also was born the primitivist idea that great art could be produced by the simple and uncultured rustic 'folk' and by the natural, uneducated genius who was untainted by the abstractions and complexities of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> See Howard Anderson and John S. Shea, *Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics, 1660-1800* (Minneapolis, 1967) and also John Buxton, *The Grecian Taste, Literature in the Age of Neo-Classicism 1740-1820* (London, 1978).

<sup>62</sup> Halsted (ed.), *Romanticism*.

civilisation.<sup>63</sup> Thus was Romanticism given over to the idea that not all was founded upon reason, that there was room also for the irrational, the original and the emotion and feeling which activated people in their creative lives.

Imagination also had a great part to play in this new outlook on human experience. For the Enlightenment intellectuals, Lockean empiricism had proved a problem when it came to understanding man's capacity to imagine and create. How could the mind achieve such things if it was merely a 'blank sheet' on which were written the results of experience of the external world? There had to be some innate power to coalesce these experiences together and form them into the flights of imagination, the pleasures and pains of emotion and the appreciation of beauty.

The doctrine of the association of ideas, perfected by the eighteenth-century philosopher David Hartley ( 1805-1757) and his ardent admirer Joseph Priestley, was adapted by the early English Romantics to enable them to synthesise the experiences of sense. The idea of the blank sheet had been replaced by one of an innate mental facility which brought together and coalesced sense experience to create something entirely new in the realms of imagination. For example, the poet William Wordsworth (1170-1850) indicated that both fancy and imagination served to modify, create and associate.<sup>64</sup> Like that of Coleridge, the essayist William Hazlitt (1778-1830), the philosopher and reformer John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and others, Wordsworth's idea of the imaginative process was a curious combination of the empiricist thought of the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, 1958), p. 181.

English Enlightenment and the subjectivity of the Romantic Age. The English Romantic mind had found a way to adapt the mechanisms of the eighteenth century to the emotion and subjectivity of the nineteenth and, employed in this way, British associationism supported the later tendency to emphasise the new importance of individual feeling.<sup>65</sup>

The idea of the adaptation of the mechanistic laws of association to the creation of imagination and feeling is a vivid example of the transitional processes which take place in the nebulous world of ideas. As John B. Halsted points out, ideas seldom move as systems. The historian of ideas must take the circumstances of writers and thinkers into account, for the ideas of the past form the context, and innovations are usually realignments of what thinkers have learned already.<sup>66</sup> The relationship, therefore, between the English Enlightenment and the Romantic Age is, like any other period of philosophical change, not easily delineated. Like the enigmatic partnership of association and imagination, the two sets of ideas were often in a state of transition which was never effectively resolved one way or another.

However, early analyses of Enlightenment thought tried to show it as a homogeneous philosophical movement which gave way in time to another definite period, that of Romanticism. The emphasis was on the conviction that the two different frames of mind presented very different sets of ideas. The Enlightenment in England was mechanistic, empiricist and atomistic. It glorified

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<sup>65</sup> Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic. Premises of Taste in Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), pp. 118-128. This study explores the treatment of the associationist mechanism by English Romantic thinkers.

<sup>66</sup> Halsted, *Romanticism*, pp. 6-7.

reason, which was possessed by all humanity in the same degree, as the ultimate solution to all human problems and equated the findings of natural philosophy with the characteristics of the social order. Romantics believed in the reality and diversity of human experience rather than the uniformity of universal abstractions, and in the spirituality of nature and the feelings of the heart rather than dry rationalism. Although there is much truth in these descriptions, early analyses gave little thought to the idea that neither philosophical movement was completely homogeneous. Ernst Cassirer's account, first published in Germany in 1932, was one which concentrated on reason as the philosophical core and its dissemination by major thinkers. Typical of this form of analysis was Cassirer's first chapter entitled 'The Mind of the Enlightenment', which implied a collective rational consciousness of its 'theory of knowledge...its philosophy of nature...its psychology...its theory of the state and society...its philosophy of religion and...its aesthetics'.<sup>67</sup>

Peter Gay's two-volume study of the Enlightenment,<sup>68</sup> published in the later 1960s, was written in a similar vein and perceived the philosophy of the age in terms of the ideas of the greatest thinkers and as homogeneous in its nature. He described the Enlightenment as a 'family of philosophes...a cultural climate...on which they attempted to impose their program'.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, Paul Hazard's treatment of the age dealt with specific thinkers and themes and called the eighteenth century the 'age of universal criticism', once again attributing to it

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<sup>67</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston, 1965), p. 36.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (London, 1967) and Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. Volume 2, The Science of Freedom* (London, 1970).

<sup>69</sup> Gay, *Rise of Modern Paganism*, p. xii.



a unity which probably it did not deserve.<sup>70</sup> Although these studies are valuable as points of reference in a complex world of ideas, they never seek to comprehend the motivation for certain modes of thought or the reality of how they alter over time.

The apparent unity, however, was fractured by some works which presented contributions from various authors on different perspectives of Enlightenment thought. For example, in a collection of essays published in 1965, Isaiah Berlin wrote on the German critic, poet and philosopher J.G. Herder (1744-1803) in an Enlightenment context while Alfred Cobban assessed its relationship to the French Revolution.<sup>71</sup> This pattern of assessing this philosophical movement from very different perspectives is followed in one very recent book on the Enlightenment. It sustains its treatment of the Enlightenment into periods, national contexts, and topics as diversified as popular culture, economics, law, government, politics and many others. The theme of this work is one of many diverse Enlightenments perceived from a large number of different angles,<sup>72</sup> and is a complete deconstruction of the idea of the philosophical monolith conceived by early historians.

Initially, however, the whole idea of a unitary philosophical movement known as the Enlightenment was dramatically undermined by the publication, in 1976, of Henry May's work, which broke down Enlightenment thought into categories and tested this method on the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in

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<sup>70</sup> Paul Hazard, *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (Gloucester, Mass., 1973).

<sup>71</sup> Earl R. Wasserman (ed.), *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1965).

<sup>72</sup> Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf and Iain McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (London, 2004).

America.<sup>73</sup> After this, a new school of thought came into being which emphasised the national and contextual nature of Enlightenment thought. Roy Porter's works, published in the 1980s considered both the Enlightenment and the Age of Romanticism from this perspective.<sup>74</sup> In his introduction to the work on Romanticism, however, Porter argued in favour of the idea that despite national variations there were persistent themes in Romantic thought which tended to give some unity to the movement. He believed that the Romantic mind rejected, for example, the general in favour of the particular, the material for the spiritual, the mechanical for the organic and perceived art not just as a product of the standards of taste but as 'the spontaneous outpourings of transcendent genius'. Romanticism then was not, as some believed, no more than 'disparate intellectual and cultural currents, eddying in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth', but an identifiable frame of mind which crossed national European borders.<sup>75</sup> In this analysis unity was detected in national diversity and important traits of Romantic thought were seen as reasonably clearly defined.

When attempts were made to chart the relationship between Romanticism and its rational predecessor, however, the task appeared to some historians even more complex, more frustratingly blurred and more nebulous than ever, for there could never be clear breaks between different eras of thought. John B. Halsted, whose analysis is compelling, wrote that in the consideration of the

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<sup>73</sup> Henry May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, 1976).

<sup>74</sup> Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.) *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981). See also Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.), *Romanticism in National Context* (Cambridge, 1988).

<sup>75</sup> Porter and Teich, *Romanticism in National Context*, pp. 1, 2.

relationship between Enlightenment and Romantic thought there was a transference and use of old doctrines in new contexts, of old forms of understanding to accommodate the new and this should 'force us to keep in mind how slow and incomplete are revolutions in thought and how strongly the past persists'.<sup>76</sup>

As the idea of unity in Enlightenment thought was gradually undermined, there came into being new perspectives on the role of religion in the Age of Reason. Early studies such as Gay's had emphasised the decline of religious belief and the critical stance of the Enlightenment towards religion during the period and consequently assessments of the relationship between religion and Enlightenment were few and far between. The view of the Enlightenment as a fiercely anti-religious period, however, has changed. This is primarily due to the fact of the realisation by modern historians that the relationship between religion and reason was far more complex than to be based upon the deistic beliefs of the French *philosophes*.<sup>77</sup>

There have been three studies published in recent years in which religion and its co-existence with Enlightenment thought have been brought closely into focus. A selection of essays edited by Knud Haakonssen which are based upon Rational Dissent, later Unitarianism, of the late eighteenth century connects the ideas of this radical group to many aspects of the society of the time.<sup>78</sup> The

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<sup>76</sup> Halsted, *Romanticism*, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 34.

<sup>78</sup> Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996). This remains one of the few studies of Rational Dissent initiated from outwith the Unitarian movement itself and concerned with the radical group as a force related to external factors during the late eighteenth century period.

contention of B.W. Young's volume *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century England : Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* is that the English Enlightenment was clerical and intellectually conservative in nature, but also not averse to stimulating controversy. It set out to study the arguments within the clerical culture rather than the usual ones between clergy and liberal Christians.<sup>79</sup> The most recent work to explore the subject of religion and reason is one by S.J. Barnett which discusses the view that deism was the 'intellectual solvent' of the eighteenth century.<sup>80</sup> Thus it would appear that the place of religion, whether liberal or orthodox, in the Enlightenment is an area of research which is currently under expansion,

There are two studies of religion and Enlightenment in the German context which ought to be mentioned here. The most recent, by Thomas Albert Howard, explores the thought of the German theologian W.M.L. de Wette (1780-1849) and the Swiss-German historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897). Howard's objective in the study of these two men is to make the point that historicism and secularisation did not constitute a break with Europe's religious heritage. De Wette was a theological radical and a historical biblical critic. Burckhardt was a theologian turned historian. Through their ideas Howard maintains that his book explores the centrality of religious concerns in the emergence of the secular historical consciousness.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England : Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>80</sup> S.J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion : The Myths of Modernity* (Manchester, 2003).

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Albert Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism : W.M.L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Consciousness* (Cambridge, 2000).

In linking historical biblical criticism with the secular historical consciousness of the nineteenth century, the second study is in many respects in a similar vein. Peter Hanns Reill's *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* brings to light aspects of the German Enlightenment through the work of writers and historical biblical critics such as J.D. Michaelis (1717-1791), J.S. Semler (1725-1891) and many others. Reill's analysis deals with a specific group of thinkers in a particular context, whose ideas were disseminated through the creation of that form of historical consciousness related to German Romanticism.<sup>82</sup> It is also Reill's concern to emphasise the importance of religious change and its influence over the philosophical, historical and cultural outlooks which blossomed in the Romantic Age. This work is particularly relevant to this thesis because it deals with the work of German scholars whose ideas were well known to the radical thinkers of English Unitarianism.

The study which follows here, of the nature and extent of the transition of the thought of the Unitarian historian John Kenrick from an Enlightenment background to an acceptance of more Romantic forms of thought, is different, however, in that it deals with the thought of one person rather than a group. It is a microcosmic analysis of aspects of one scholar's intellectual development in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It does share with Reill's study the desire to show how religious concerns, deeply felt, are able to influence the re-formation of old ideas into an accommodation with the new. The thought of John Kenrick did undergo a significant degree of transformation from Enlightenment values to Romantic ideas during his productive lifetime. These changes were

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<sup>82</sup> Reill, *The German Enlightenment*.

brought about by a number of influences, but of great importance to the direction of his thought were the concepts of the Unitarianism to which he adhered all his life. John Kenrick's experience is a good example of how religious beliefs are able to project themselves into secular thinking and alter the course of the development of a single mind in some ways which may be quite unexpected.

Because the Unitarian tradition and its theological beliefs were of great influence on Kenrick in his encounters with other intellectual forms, the thesis is structured in a particular way. The first three substantive chapters are in the main related to aspects of Unitarianism in general, while the following three are concerned with the thought of John Kenrick himself. The structure owes much to the idea of the importance of context in the history of ideas in the work of J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*.<sup>83</sup> Burrow argued that it is less than helpful to concentrate exclusively on the work of an individual historian without close study of the context in which he worked. Those who do so miss a point that is central to intellectual history, which is that understanding a past author requires not simply attention to his context, but very close attention. The study of contexts themselves need examination of other texts and authors in order to establish the intellectual framework within which the object of study worked. Burrow argues that this approach will help to produce a 'sense of the complex ways in which individuals respond to, assimilate and reshape the materials of their intellectual milieu'.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent : Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge, 1981).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

With the importance of the context in mind, the method of the thesis also owes a great deal to the advice of Quentin Skinner to the historian of ideas. The historian should be directed towards an understanding of ‘seeing things their way’ and attempting to discover the intentionality and motivations which lay behind each utterance of the subject of study.<sup>85</sup> Skinner believes correctly that if we wish to understand any text we ought to be able to give an account not merely of the meaning of what was said or written, but also of what the writer may have actually *meant* by saying what he did.<sup>86</sup> The understanding of texts presupposes the grasp of what they were intended to mean and of how that meaning was intended to be understood by others at the time.<sup>87</sup> This cannot happen unless the writer of the text is understood within his own context.

Both Burrow and Skinner emphasise in their own way the crucial importance of context in the history of ideas. The following study of John Kenrick’s thought has been structured around their arguments for two reasons. Firstly, the objective here is to establish the fact that Socinianism of the kind that Joseph Priestley expounded was a unique form of religious thought which was centred upon a monistic perspective on reality. It took this form for particular theological reasons and it projected these into the significant tradition of historical biblical criticism in Socinian circles which had grown during the eighteenth century in England. Secondly, the context having been firmly established, it will become clear that in some instances the framework, or conceptual ‘shape’ of this

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<sup>85</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2003). Particularly relevant here are Skinner’s introduction, on pp. 1-7, and also the chapter entitled ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, pp 57-89.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

form of religious belief was maintained by John Kenrick when he encountered other intellectual influences during his life. The Unitarian frame of mind was dominant in his response to changing intellectual circumstances and consequently was responsible for accommodating and reshaping some of the new ideas in certain distinctive ways.

Thus, Burrow's method is useful, for the establishment of a context which includes textual evidence from other writers gives a validity and understanding of the ideas of the emergent writer when he encounters fresh influences. Skinner's view is invaluable also. It is crucial to understand the Unitarian frame of mind, for otherwise the historian would be unable to grasp how and why Kenrick re-moulded other ideas in the way that he did. The use of these methods in tracing the interactions between Kenrick's Unitarianism and other intellectual influences of the time goes a long way to revealing that the contrast between Enlightenment and Romantic thought is often over-emphasised by more general studies.

This study of John Kenrick's work and thought involved not only readings of his own published and unpublished material, but also required the scrutiny of texts by other writers, including Joseph Priestley, Richard Price and others of the Unitarian persuasion. A full list of material relating to them and to Kenrick himself is given in the bibliography, but some general points merit discussion here. Between 1807 and 1868, John Kenrick published articles and books on biblical criticism, classical philology, ancient history, archaeology, Unitarianism and many other topics. His philological works, on Greek and Latin grammar, were published in the years following his studies in Germany in 1819-1820. His



historical works were written later. *Primæval History* appeared in 1846, and his other two major historical works, *Ancient Egypt Under the Pharaohs* and *Phœnicia*, were published 1850 and 1855 respectively.

*Primæval History* was not so much a historical work as the results of a radical thinker's encounter with the problem of Genesis in the face of the new discoveries of geology, physiology and philology of the mid- nineteenth century. Kenrick was a brilliant scholar and usually a writer of well-structured and coherent arguments, but this particular work, which is rather opaque, requires some effort to ascertain his opinions on the controversial subjects he has tackled. Not only did it reveal something of his views on the validity of the ancient Hebrew writings, but it also indicated what were his opinions on the origins of man and the relationship between religion and science. The other two histories, of Egypt and Phœnicia, are more straightforward in their content, but are nevertheless ahead of their time in that they follow a method of separating out for particular attention many different aspects of the ancient states. Later, in the 1850s and 1860s were published collections of papers, discourses and articles on biblical criticism, history and archaeology.<sup>88</sup> The content of these short works on historical criticism show how his views on the fundamentals of Unitarian theology remained consistent for many years. This gives force to the argument that when 're-formations' of his thought did take place, they did so when the tenets of the Unitarian tradition were still dominant in his mind.

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<sup>88</sup> John Kenrick, *The Value of the Holy Scriptures and the Right Mode of Using Them* (London, 1853), *Biblical Essays* (London, 1864) and *A Selection of Papers on Archaeology and History, Communicated to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society* (London, 1864).

In addition to these separate works there are a number of sermons and more than ninety journal articles and reviews which were published over a period of sixty one years. They appeared in the *Monthly Repository*, *Christian Reformer*, *Philological Museum*, *Prospective Review* and other journals and were written on a wealth of topics.<sup>89</sup> They ranged from an early appreciation of the German critics J.J. Griesbach (1745-1812), Michaelis and Semler, to reviews of the work of English historians such as George Grote and T.B. Macaulay. Kenrick wrote articles on such diverse topics as Roman obelisks and daemonic possession in India, on the languages of ancient Greece, on Jewish coins and Hebrew palaeography. Also, like many of his contemporaries in the Unitarian denomination Kenrick often engaged in controversies on many issues and in such articles his views are more often than not very clearly stated.

Unpublished manuscripts relating to Kenrick's life and work are to be found in Harris Manchester College in Oxford, where there is a wealth of correspondence between himself and his friend George William Wood, the trustee of Manchester College. Although these letters were written mainly on practical matters, they give some evidence on Kenrick's fascination for German literature. There were many requests from Kenrick to Wood for the payment of bills for the purchase of German books through agents in London and Manchester. There are also Kenrick family documents in the Sharpe Papers, in the library of University College, London, which include Kenrick's own recollections of his early life, written for his wife in the 1870s. There is some correspondence with Charles Beard (1827-1888), the Unitarian who edited the

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<sup>89</sup> See bibliography for a full list of all Kenrick's articles.

*Theological Review*, in the library of the University of Liverpool and a few personal letters are to be found in the John Rylands University Library in Manchester.

The largest amount of personal material, however, is kept in Dr Williams's Library in London. This collection contains early essays, including his 'A Specimen of the Application of Historical Principles to the Explanation of the Greek Mythology', written in 1816.<sup>90</sup> This particular essay gives clear evidence of the integration of some important ideas with those of the Greek classical mythologists. It was, fortunately, written in longhand, which was sadly not the case with the bulk of the material in the Kenrick Papers in Dr Williams's Library. Most of it, including seventeen notebooks containing lecture notes compiled during Kenrick's teaching career at York and other bundles of folios, including those of notes taken in Germany in 1819-1820, were written in Rich's shorthand. There is an appendix to this thesis which explains the background to this form of shorthand and the problems it poses for the modern scholar, problems which have not been entirely insurmountable. In the appendix is the transcription of an important page of a body of material entitled 'German Literature'. A full list of all John Kenrick's published and unpublished works, along with those authors who provided the context for his intellectual development, is to be found in the bibliography.

The purpose of this thesis is to trace, through the work of John Kenrick, the outlines of his transition from the context of the eighteenth century Enlightenment to the more Romantic ideas of the nineteenth century. These

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<sup>90</sup> See chapter five, below.

ideas emerged in his treatment of ancient history and myth, in his understanding of language and in his views on the origins of man and the relationship between reason and faith. The contention here is that the work of John Kenrick reveals an intellectual journey from the rational, mechanical, monist milieu established by Joseph Priestley in the later eighteenth century to a new frame of mind dominated by a dualist perspective on reason and faith which reflected the ideas of the latter half of the following century. It is hoped that the thesis will show something of how his Unitarianism interacted with various complex forms of influence from both German and English Romantic thought to produce this new frame of mind. The method here is to consider to a considerable extent the context from which John Kenrick emerged as a scholar and thereafter how that affected his historical and theological conclusions. This study, unlike many which are devoted to the generalisations of the interaction between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, hopes also to reveal in the work of one man the reality of intellectual change.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE RADICAL INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND : A DIVIDED LEGACY

The ideas of Rational Dissenters, whose successors were to become known as Unitarians, were an important source of radical English Enlightenment thought from the early decades of the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. However, this group cannot be seen in terms of philosophy, politics or theology as a homogeneous body of thinkers. A key characteristic of Rational Dissent was the principle of free inquiry, and consequently these influential intellectuals presented many different perspectives on the issues of the period. Within this wide spectrum of new ideas in the eighteenth century, however, may be detected two distinctive strains of radical thought which had polarised by its closing decades.

It is important to determine the nature of these, for one of them provides a point of reference from which the changes which had taken place by the mid nineteenth century in Unitarian thought in general, and in John Kenrick's in particular, may be assessed. That strain of thought which forms a base from which to consider the nature and extent of change is the one related to Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). Priestley's frame of mind is important to understand also because he was a towering influence on Rational Dissent and Unitarianism throughout this earlier period, and also well into the nineteenth century. The method employed here to reveal the fundamental nature of Priestley's intellectual

position is to set it against that of Richard Price (1723-1791). In this way a comparison may be made between the *monism* of Priestley and the *dualist* frame of mind which had been adopted by Price. This discussion will reveal just how fundamentally different these two perceptions of reality actually were.

It is hoped that the following analysis will contribute in some ways to an assessment of the nature and depth of the changes which took place in Unitarian thought over the following six or seven decades. This identification of the nature of the intellectual position which supported the Socinianism of Joseph Priestley helps to outline important aspects of the context of Unitarian thought from which John Kenrick himself emerged as a critic, thinker and historian. Kenrick's intellectual development took place during the complex transitional period between the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the Romanticism of the following century. It is hoped that by focusing upon Priestley's intellectual position it may be possible to gain an insight into the essence of his Socinianism and to understand the outlines of the form of thought which helped to shape John Kenrick's attitudes over time.

In theological terms these two very different frames of mind, dualism and monism, manifested themselves in Arianism and Socinianism and may be clearly seen in the religious ideas of Price and Priestley<sup>1</sup> The argument presented in this chapter is that these two theological positions were supported by two very different intellectual structures and indeed it would appear that the ideas of these

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of such a comprehensive comparison I first outlined in a paper entitled 'Religious Perspectives on the Intellectual Positions of Joseph Priestley and Richard Price'. The paper was read at a one-day conference of the Ecclesiastical History Society on the History of Christianity held at the University of Birmingham on 29 March 1999.

two thinkers represented a significant division in the radical thought of the eighteenth century.

It is true that different aspects of Price and Priestley have been discussed and compared many times.<sup>2</sup> Often, however, elements of their thought are discussed in isolation or, more rarely, the analysis makes linkages between two or three aspects of the thought of one or the other. This chapter contains the first attempt to outline their different positions in terms of two contrasting strains of radical eighteenth-century intellectual development, and to discuss the relationship of this collection of perspectives to their different theological beliefs. The objective here is to bring together into one conceptual whole the sum of parts in the intellectual frameworks which underpinned Price's Arianism and Priestley's Socinianism. This theological position which was taken by Joseph Priestley caused much controversy amongst those of an orthodox persuasion but

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<sup>2</sup> There are, surprisingly, very few examples of comparisons between elements of the thought of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, even in the series of journals devoted almost exclusively to their contribution to the history of ideas. One, by Henri Laboucheix, deals mainly with their opposing views on topics concerning the nature of matter and liberty and necessity. See 'Chemistry, Materialism and Theology', *PPN*, No. 1, 1977, pp. 31-48. In the lifetime of the *Price-Priestley Newsletter*, which was published from 1977 to 1980 and its successor, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, published from 1982 to 2001 and still in publication, rarely are the two thinkers compared directly with one another. Analyses either deal with specific aspects on one of the thinkers, or are made with other writers and thinkers of the time. For the ideas of Richard Price, see, for example, John Stephens, 'The Epistemological Strategy of Price's 'Review of Morals'', *ED*, No. 5, 1986, pp. 39-50, Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Reflections on a Footnote: Richard Price and Love of Country' *ED*, No. 6, 1987, pp. 49-58, and John Stephens, 'Conscience and the Epistemology of Morals: Richard Price's Debt to Joseph Butler', *ED*, No. 19, 2000, pp. 133-146. For Priestley, see Margaret Canovan 'Two Concepts of Liberty – Eighteenth Century Style', *PPN*, No. 2, 1978, pp. 27-43, in which the ideas on freedom stated by the pioneer liberal Joseph Priestley are set against those of John Brown, an Anglican Vicar of Newcastle whose views were derived from the tradition of classical republicanism. Other comparisons concerning the ideas of Priestley and Price tend to be made between one element of their own individual thought and another. For discussions about the thought of Joseph Priestley, see, for example, James T. Hoecker, 'Joseph Priestley and the Reification of Religion', *PPN*, No. 2, 1978, pp. 44-75, Robert E. Schofield, 'Joseph Priestley : Theology, Physics and Metaphysics', *ED*, No. 2, 1983, pp. 69-81, Karis Müller, 'Physics and the Deity: The Ideas of R. Boscovich and J. Priestley', *ED*, No. 12, 1993, pp. 49-62. In a more recent article, Robert E. Schofield links Priestley's monism to his theology and his chemistry in the article, 'Monism, Unitarianism and Phlogiston in Joseph Priestley's Natural Philosophy', *ED*, No. 19, 2000, pp. 78-90.

was of great influence within radical circles. Those who followed Priestley's ideas rejected the notion of the pre-existence of Christ and favoured instead a form of belief which perceived him essentially as an entirely *human* figure.<sup>3</sup>

Initially, the chapter will discuss some general points related to Arianism and Socinianism and will outline some aspects of the views of earlier thinkers who held these theological positions. It is hoped from this to identify the sources of this subsequent polarisation of two radical theological positions and the frames of mind which supported them. It will suggest also that throughout the eighteenth century in England there were the outlines of two intellectual currents in radical Enlightenment thought, one tending to dualism, the other to monism.

The discussion will then consider different aspects of the thought of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley. It will show their contrasting perspectives on liberty and necessity, the source of moral knowledge and the nature of matter. It will expound their ideas on two different political systems, and it will reveal how clearly these views supported their theological positions. The method here is not one which tries to trace developments in their thought from a chronological perspective, but rather represents a conceptual analysis of the differences between elements of their worldviews. There are two primary objectives in this discussion, firstly, to bring together these themes and to relate them to the dualist and monist positions of these two thinkers and secondly, by doing so to define that particular frame of mind which lay behind the Socinian thought of Joseph Priestley. The final part of the chapter will discuss Priestley's legacy, paying particular attention to the Socinianism which was the defining belief of

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<sup>3</sup> See chapter 3 below.



many of the later Unitarian historical biblical critics, including John Kenrick himself.<sup>4</sup>

The theological traditions of Arianism and Socinianism, both of which rejected orthodox Trinitarianism, were formed long before they were apparent in eighteenth-century radical thought. The concepts surrounding Arianism were complex, and their implications for the doctrine of salvation were argued in the lengthy Arian controversy of the fourth century. The debate which followed Arius' contention that Christ was a created being and subordinate to God in an ontological sense ended in the year 381, when Christ was declared to be of the 'same substance' as the Father.<sup>5</sup> Socinianism, the belief that Christ was *no more than* a human being, was derived from the works of the Italian-born theologian Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), whose ideas were introduced into England in the seventeenth century. Socinus taught that Christ was a mortal without sin and that Christian faith was the belief in the truth of his teachings.

What Arianism and Socinianism had in common, of course, was an antipathy to orthodox ideas about the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The terms on which the two radical anti-orthodox theological positions founded their beliefs, however, were fundamentally different. Arians retained the opinion that Christ, although subordinate to God, was a divine, created being who had existed

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter three, below.

<sup>5</sup> Many critics suggest that Arius' view of God as the source of all created things including Jesus Christ himself, owes more to Hellenistic philosophy than to Christian theology. The fourth century debate was centred around the role of Christ as Saviour and redeemer of the sins of mankind. If, argued Athanasius, Christ was a mere created creature, then he could not redeem another creature and therefore could not be the Saviour of humanity. In the year 381 the debate was settled when the Nicene Creed declared Christ to be homoousios, or 'of the same substance' as God himself. A very comprehensive account of the history and development of Arianism may be found in Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Throughout the Centuries* (Oxford, 1996). For an analysis from both historical and theological perspectives of this crucial doctrinal struggle of the fourth century see Rowan Williams, *Arius* (London, 2001).

before his appearance on earth. This belief tended to carry with it a weight of metaphysical speculation on the relationship between Christ and the Father, but in addition had a resonance which extended beyond that. Joseph Priestley argued that due to its acceptance of the idea of a pre-existent Jesus Christ belief in Arianism could be seen as consistent with the idea of the immateriality of the human soul,<sup>6</sup> an idea to which he was strongly opposed.

The basis for the Socinians' rejection of the Trinity and also other orthodox doctrines such as atonement and original sin was very different from and indeed much more radical than, the rationale for Arianism. Socinianism supposed that far from being either one of three divine beings or a creature who had existed as a being prior to his earthly lifetime, Christ was no more than human. Thus Socinianism not only opposed Trinitarianism, but also rejected all Arian notions about the pre-existence of Christ. Consequently, although both these radical perspectives on Christian belief opposed orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, they nevertheless disagreed also in fundamental terms with one another. When he wrote about the period following the council of Nicaea in the fourth century, Joseph Priestley remarked that those who maintained belief in the simple humanity of Christ were silenced by both Trinitarians and Arians, and indeed, 'of the two, the latter were full as hostile to them as the former'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See the discussion on the theological positions of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley below. Note, for example, the view expressed by Joseph Priestley in the discussion in, 'A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God and Against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and From History', in *Tracts Printed and Published by the Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue*, vol. 1 (London, 1790), p. 189-190. Here, Priestley argued that 'The doctrine of Christ's pre-existence goes upon the idea of the possibility, at least, of the pre-existence of other men, and supposes an immaterial soul in man, altogether independent of the body'.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (London, 1871), p. 26.

These two forms of opposition to orthodoxy are present in the theological views of the two giants of the English Enlightenment, Isaac Newton (1642-1727), who was an Arian, and John Locke (1632-1707) who very probably held Socinian views. Newton was notoriously secretive about his theological ideas due to his anxieties that radical beliefs might compromise his position and his work.<sup>8</sup> Consequently there was, and still is, much debate amongst historians about the nature of his faith,<sup>9</sup> and many conflicting opinions both amongst Newton's own contemporaries and modern historians.<sup>10</sup> Maurice Wiles argues, however, that it was Newton's reading of a passage of Philippians<sup>11</sup> which confirmed his position, for here Newton understood two forms of worship, one for God the Father and the other for the one Lord, the Son. It is this interpretation, Wiles insists, which proved without doubt Newton's Arianism and his acceptance of Christ's pre-existence.<sup>12</sup>

The true nature of John Locke's theological beliefs is also uncertain. In an age which persecuted heresy he would have been reluctant to reveal any unorthodox ideas which he held. Although B.W. Young argues that Locke was a radical Protestant rather than a Socinian,<sup>13</sup> there is evidence to show that even if Locke was not entirely sympathetic to the more radical belief, then he came very close. Like John Tillotson (1630-1694), the liberal churchman who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1691, he was accused of Socinianism, in Locke's

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<sup>8</sup> Bernard Cohen and Richard Westfall (eds.), *Newton* (London, 1995), p. 362.

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 62-164.

<sup>10</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, pp. 77-93.

<sup>11</sup> Philippians 2; 5-11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>13</sup> B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998), p.27.

case rather famously by the Anglican Calvinist John Edwards, against whose allegations he protested.<sup>14</sup> In his denials, however, Locke never used the most obvious defence of all, which would have been to come out in favour of Trinitarianism and other orthodox doctrines. When Locke was accused of heterodox opinions, he never affirmed his belief in the doctrine in question, but rather denied that he had denied it.<sup>15</sup>

However, while Locke resorted to such evasions in confrontational situations, in his writings he did reveal evidence of his religious tendencies. John Marshall points out that as early as 1684 Locke argued that education determined a man's level of virtue and believes that this places him firmly in the Socinian camp on the question of man's sinful inheritance.<sup>16</sup> The evidence for Locke's Socinianism, however, is not purely textual. Locke read many Socinian works and associated with many other liberal theologians both in England and abroad. Mario Montuori cites a letter in French from Locke to the Dutch Arminian theologian Philip van Limborch (1633-1712) as evidence of Locke's Socinianism, for he believes it contains an explicit confession of Locke's position on the question of the nature of the Word in Christ.<sup>17</sup> However, it is not only many modern writers who believe in Locke's Socinianism. The nineteenth-century

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<sup>14</sup> John Locke, *A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity As Delivered in the Scriptures*, in *The Works of John Locke*, 10 vols [1823], Reprint (Darmstadt, 1963), vol. vii, pp. 159-190.

<sup>15</sup> Gerard Reedy, *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth Century England* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1985), p. 135. Locke's evasion is evident, for when challenged that he denies Christ's death as satisfaction for the sins of mankind and is therefore a Socinian, Locke makes no commitment to an orthodox position and writes instead that, 'because I have not set down all that this author perhaps would have done, therefore I am a Socinian. But what if I should say, I set down as much as my argument required, and yet am no Socinian? Would he, from my silence and omission, give me the lie, and say, I am one?' See Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, p. 163.

<sup>16</sup> John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 343-345, pp. 397-398 and pp. 414-415.

<sup>17</sup> Mario Montuori, *John Locke on Toleration and the Unity of God* (Amsterdam, 1983), pp. 124-126. See esp. pp. 124-125, note 16.

Unitarian biographer, Alexander Gordon, wrote with some conviction that Locke 'may pass for the Socinus of his age'.<sup>18</sup>

There are also distinct contrasts between the opinions of Newton and Locke about the nature of matter. Many of Newton's ideas altered during his lifetime, and there was disagreement for a long period amongst historians of science about Newton's exact position on the problem of matter. The crucial question was whether Newton thought particles were inactive and impenetrable, or whether they shared something in common with an immaterial world. There now, however, appears to be a consensus that he in fact consistently maintained a belief in the inertial homogeneity of matter, and thought therefore that that matter was inactive and impenetrable.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, in Newton's world, matter and the immaterial, whether spirit or soul, were separate from the material, and as an Arian in theology, believing in the pre-existence of Christ, he may have felt at ease with such a conclusion.

Contrastingly, it appears that Locke at the very least may have *considered* the idea of the interaction between matter and the immaterial. Although he seems to have been firmly of the opinion that thought could not be a *property* of matter, he did believe in the possibility that 'God can...superadd to matter a

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<sup>18</sup> Alexander Gordon, *Heads of Unitarian History* (London, 1895), p. 31. To quote Gordon in full, he writes of Locke that, 'There was the same lay disengagement from scholasticism, the same purpose of toleration tempered by prudence, the same interest in the minimising of essentials, and the same recurrence to Scripture, interpreted (that is to say, rationalised) by common sense rather than by profound exegesis.' Gordon asserts that Locke's simplification of the idea of Jesus as Messiah was accepted eagerly by liberal Dissenters as an undisputed axiom. Gordon writes also that the mode of thinking contained in Locke's posthumous *Paraphrases of St. Paul* (1705-1707) culminated a century later in works such as the *Improved Version of the New Testament* (1808), and *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle, Translated with An Exposition and Notes* (1822) by the Unitarian commentator Thomas Belsham (1750-1829).

<sup>19</sup> Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, 'Newton's Alchemy and his Theory of Matter', in Cohen and Westfall (eds.), *Newton*, pp. 316-317.

faculty of thinking'.<sup>20</sup> Locke's other contentious suggestion was that immateriality was not necessary for immortality.<sup>21</sup> Such ideas, which hinted at a belief in a form of materialism, caused much controversy at the time and engendered great interest amongst the French *philosophes*, particularly Diderot and Condillac. As will become evident, however, it was Joseph Priestley who, in his own original approach to the problem, found a way through the 'thinking matter' controversy in the later eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

There were other aspects of the intellectual positions of Newton and Locke which differed. B.W. Young argues that far from there being a fusion of their thought,<sup>23</sup> there is in fact a strong suggestion of the existence of a disjunction between the two great thinkers.<sup>24</sup> Young cites the example of the different approaches of Newton and Locke to the nature of space and time. While Newton emphasised their objective, absolute existence beyond the scope of human experience, Locke's view was based on his own empiricist philosophy.<sup>25</sup> While Newton was concerned with the absolute veracity of space and time, Locke's interests were in the nature of cognition and in the *human perceptions* of the two factors.<sup>26</sup>

There is a clear distinction also between the 'absolute' nature of God in Newton's *Principia* and the 'humanised piety' of the idea of God as defined by

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<sup>20</sup> John Locke, *The Works of John Locke* (London, 1823), 4,3,6, quoted by John Yolton, *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> See below.

<sup>23</sup> Young, *Religion and Enlightenment*, pp. 83-86.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. Following Young's suggestion, see also W. von Leyden, 'History and the Concept of Relative Time', *HT*, vol.2 (1962), pp. 263-285. Note also pp. 264-268 in which the author discusses the question of relativity in the question of the moral law in Locke's thought.

<sup>26</sup> Young, *Religion and Enlightenment*, p. 92.

Locke the empiricist.<sup>27</sup> Thus there are in theology, natural philosophy and epistemology indications of some important differences in the thought of Newton and Locke. They reveal contrasting ideas about the nature of matter and about space and time, which exist alongside their different theological beliefs. Consequently, even before those two Rational Dissenters, Price and Priestley, formulated their ideas, there is the suggestion that Arianism and Socinianism were associated with two rather different perspectives on the nature of existence.

Newton's Arian beliefs were given expression in a work entitled *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, published in 1712 by the theologian Samuel Clarke (1675-1729). It is often said that Clarke was to theology what Newton was to physics. Clarke argued from an Arian perspective against orthodox Trinitarianism, finding in the scriptures no proof to support the complex metaphysical relationships required by the latter doctrine.<sup>28</sup> Clarke's basic position on the question was that Christ was pre-existent to his time on earth and, although subordinate to God himself, had all the same divine powers. The unity of God was reflected in the Father as the one and only source of all authority.<sup>29</sup> For the orthodox, Samuel Clarke's Arianism was unacceptable because he had reduced Christ to a subordinate position in relation to God. Likewise, for the Socinians Clarke's Arianism was equally unpalatable, but this time on the basis that he believed in the pre-existence of Christ and gave him the divine status which they asserted was not proved by scripture.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> J. Hay Colligan, *The Arian Movement in England* (Manchester, 1913), pp. 36-38.

<sup>29</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, p. 112.

The radical theological work which gave force to the Socinian view was the *Letter on the Logos*. It was written in 1730 by the Nonconformist divine Nathaniel Lardner (1684-1768) but not, however, published until almost thirty years later, in 1759.<sup>30</sup> Lardner's discussion followed the Lockean tradition of reliance upon scripture alone as a guide to doctrine. It was directed towards the question as to whether the Logos, which Arians understood as a pre-existent created spirit and subordinate agent in the creation of the world, actually occupied the place of a human soul in the person of Jesus Christ. Lardner argued that the Arian position was wrong, and came up with some very persuasive arguments to prove his point. For example, he asked how could it be that Christ could be tempted, by the offer of those earthly kingdoms he himself was responsible for creating?

Lardner's ingenious arguments were hidden from all but a few for almost thirty years, but after its publication in 1759, his treatise symbolised 'a memorable epoch in the history and progress of religious truth'.<sup>31</sup> His volume, a vindication of Socinianism, and Clarke's treatise on Arianism, put into so many words the essence of these two forms of radical theology which differed so fundamentally from one another. Thus there was a long tradition of controversy in radical theological circles about the nature of Christ which coalesced in these two eighteenth-century works.

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<sup>30</sup> Lardner's opinions carried great weight, for he was already highly acclaimed as the scholar who had produced the *Credibility of the Gospel History* in seventeen volumes (London, 1727-1757). See Gordon, *English Unitarian History*, pp. 37-38. Also see W. Turner, *Lives of Eminent Unitarians*, vol. 1 (London, 1840), pp. 126-163, for a short but useful biographical essay on Lardner.

<sup>31</sup> W. Turner, *Lives of Eminent Unitarians*, vol. 1, pp. 155-157.



They influenced greatly Price and Priestley, two thinkers who had had rather different experiences of the Calvinism of their youth. Although little detailed evidence remains about life in the pious Price family home in Glamorgan, it appears that Richard Price's father, Rice Price, was a high Calvinist.<sup>32</sup> This would indicate that he believed in an absolute Divine will and sovereignty which held arbitrary sway, expressing itself in supralapsarianism,<sup>33</sup> and unconditional election resulting in limited atonement. As Richard Price's lifelong friend, William Morgan, wrote 'The opinions of the one [Richard Price] were candid, liberal and benevolent; those of the other [Rice Price] were narrow, selfish and gloomy'.<sup>34</sup> Many years later Richard Price wrote to his sister that the religion he supported was not one 'sour or enthusiastical', but rather one which was 'free from bigotry, superstition and uncharitableness'.<sup>35</sup> The young Price's aversion to his father's beliefs guided him towards a liberal theology inspired by Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. The story goes that when the elder Price found his son reading this work he became enraged and threw the book on the fire.

As an alternative to Calvinism Richard Price chose Arianism as a middle way between the orthodoxy of his youth on the one hand and Socinianism on the other. His theology was related closely to the Newton-Clarke tradition, and it was

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<sup>32</sup> D.O. Thomas, *The Honest Mind: The Thought and Work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977), p.3. According to Andrew Fuller, leading Baptist theologian in the latter part of the eighteenth century, High Calvinists were 'more Calvinistic than Calvin himself'. See D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 122, 125.

<sup>33</sup> The belief among some High Calvinists that God chose his 'elect' for salvation even before the Fall.

<sup>34</sup> William Morgan, quoted from *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Richard Price, D.D., F.R.S* (London, 1815), p. 6, in Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Price, quoted by Caroline E. Williams *A Welsh Family* (London, 1893), and in Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 34.

greatly due to the influence of Clarke in particular that Price became an Arian in his beliefs.<sup>36</sup> A radical in theology, Price rejected not only the idea of God's absolute and unconditional sovereignty, but also the Calvinist view of punishment, its predestinarian elements<sup>37</sup> and the determinism they implied.

In Price's conception of God there is an absence of the complete certainty about the moral rectitude and authority of the deity which was so characteristic of his father's orthodox faith. Instead, he links his concept of the deity's goodness to the probability theory he learned from the theologian and mathematician Thomas Bayes (1702-1761).<sup>38</sup> Price challenged the unquestioning assumption of God's wisdom and virtue by comparing its assumed certainty to the throwing of an infinite number of dice, each having an infinite number of faces and cast all together an infinite number of times. Although it is 'infallibly true' that it will not happen, that they will present the same faces each time, 'yet [it] may happen'.<sup>39</sup> Thus, although the chance that God is not always wise and good is utterly infinitesimal, the possibility nevertheless still exists that this could be the case. If man were like God he would have certain knowledge of God's virtue, but because he is human he can have only probable knowledge. Consequently,

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Bayes was the first to use probability theory inductively. He established a mathematical method of calculating from the frequency of past occurrences of an event what chance there was of it happening again in the future. Price and Bayes were friends for some years and after Bayes' death Price published in 1763 a portion of his work entitled 'An Essay Towards Solving a Problem in the Doctrine of Chances', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, liii, 1764, pp. 370-418. See Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 128. Bayes is reputed to have studied under the French mathematician Abraham de Moivre (1667-1754), who was a pioneer in the theory of probability and whose famous work the *Doctrine of Chances* was published in 1718. A French Huguenot, he was jailed after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and on his release fled to England where he became a close friend of Sir Isaac Newton and where he spent the rest of his life.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Price, *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* [1787] Reprint (New York, 1974), p. 426.

there are suggestions here, both in an ontological and an epistemological sense, that God's goodness cannot be taken for granted.

On the question of the harsh Calvinist view of eternal punishment Price's mathematical inclinations are evident. Assuming there was a future world, it would be one where present inequalities will be adjusted and a proper distinction made between good and bad men so that 'In the future state all men shall receive an adequate retribution'.<sup>40</sup> Thus, humankind was not subject to a predestined fate, for the practice of virtue was the best hope to secure happiness 'through every possible future period of our duration'<sup>41</sup> and all virtuous men would be rewarded with salvation and 'glorious IMMORTALITY'.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, men were not condemned to pre-ordained bliss or misery, but were themselves responsible through their virtue or wickedness for the state of their own happiness in a possible future life. Thus Price's Arianism was underpinned by thoughts of probability rather than certainty and a view which understood man as an active being in a balanced, rational relationship with his maker and with the power to determine his own fate.

Although he would certainly have read Nathaniel Lardner's *Letter on the Logos* when it was published anonymously ten years earlier, Joseph Priestley very probably owed his final conversion from Arianism to Socinianism to his re-reading of the work in the year of Lardner's death, in 1769.<sup>43</sup> Over the period of the next few years he announced his new beliefs in a series of pamphlets

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Price, Dissertation 3, 'On the Reasons for Expecting that Virtuous Men shall meet after Death in a State of Happiness', in *Four Dissertations* (London 1768), p. 322.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 321-322.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>43</sup> Gordon, *Heads of Unitarian History*, p. 109.

published in Leeds.<sup>44</sup> One of his most concise and powerful denunciations of orthodox doctrine was made two years after Lardner's death, in his *Appeal to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity*, which was first published in 1771.<sup>45</sup> Of the doctrine of election he wrote that it was 'a doctrine of licentiousness, and not a doctrine according to godliness.'<sup>46</sup> Original sin he believed was a 'strange doctrine...injurious both to our maker and ourselves'.<sup>47</sup> The doctrine of the atonement 'arose from the abuse of the figurative language of scripture',<sup>48</sup> and the notion of the divinity of Christ was the 'great corruption of Christianity'.<sup>49</sup>

However, despite his rejection of these pillars of the orthodox Calvinist faith Priestley did nevertheless hold some reverence for the religion of his youth and admitted that he 'feel[s]...disposed to look upon Calvinism with a kind of respect'.<sup>50</sup> Such feelings of warmth may in some respects have been generated by a youth spent in the care of his beloved aunt, Sarah Keighley, the devout Calvinist who brought him up from the age of nine. To Priestley this 'truly pious and excellent woman' was a 'true parent',<sup>51</sup> and indeed he reflected on the gratitude he owed to his aunt who, despite her stern faith, was 'in all respects as

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<sup>44</sup> Robert E. Schofield, *The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1733 to 1773* (University Park, Pennsylvania), p. 173.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Priestley, 'An Appeal to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity', in *Tracts: Printed and Published by the Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue* (London, 1791), pp. 1-56.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit and The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated* [1777] Reprint (New York, 1976). Hereafter *Disquisitions* and *Philosophical Necessity*. See *Philosophical Necessity*, p. 163.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph Priestley, quoted in John Towill Rutt, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Priestley*, 2 vols (London, 1831), vol. 1, p. 7.

perfect a human...as I have ever yet been acquainted with'.<sup>52</sup> It is perhaps this good relationship in his early life which explains Priestley's accommodation with certain aspects of the faith of his childhood. In any analysis concerned with the history of ideas one should never discount the powerful influences of personal experience.

It may have been some underlying respect for Calvinism which added a certain flexibility to Priestley's approach to the relationship between Calvinist ideas about predestination, election, God's providential designs for the world and his doctrine of necessity. This doctrine did not imply fate, but rather a 'mechanism of the mind' which depended upon motive as determining the actions of the will. By this means, he wrote, from the beginning of the world to the 'consummation of all things' there is 'one connected *chain of causes and effects*, originally established by the Deity'.<sup>53</sup> Although he conceded that there was a belief of a close connection between necessity and predestination, Priestley argued that the two were quite different. The scheme of necessity had been established by infinite wisdom and terminated in the 'greatest good of the whole universe'. No necessitarian, wrote Priestley, imagined 'that any of the human race will suffer eternally'.<sup>54</sup>

Priestley could not see any resemblance between the two schemes 'except that the future happiness or misery of all men are certainly foreknown, and appointed by God'.<sup>55</sup> It was in this respect that necessity was almost

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<sup>52</sup> Priestley, *Philosophical Necessity*, p. 164.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153.

indistinguishable from the absolute decrees, and he who believed in divine providence 'could not avoid speaking like a necessitarian on the subject'.<sup>56</sup> Thus although Priestley condemned the ideas of election and eternal punishment, he tended to retain the 'absoluteness' of God's foreknowledge and plans for humankind which were inherent in the Calvinist system. At no time did he question God's virtue, the Divine will or the absolute sovereignty of God over the world. In a sermon given almost a century later, the Unitarian theologian James Martineau (1805-1900) commented on this aspect of Priestley's thought. Martineau noted that the 'exile of Pennsylvania' had vindicated the Sovereignty of the universal Father', for in Priestley's mind

it is plain, the "eternal decrees" have not yet  
taken their departure; by the touch of benevolence  
they have lost indeed their cruelty, but not their  
absoluteness<sup>57</sup>

Thus Priestley's emergence from Calvinism was different in important respects from that of Richard Price. Price took a radical anti-Calvinist position and undermined the absolute sovereignty of God by locating the answer to the question of his wisdom and virtue in the realms of probability. For Priestley, on the other hand, God's wisdom and virtue were certain, as was his plan for the world. This would come about by God's superintendence over the operation of a vast, seamless and unbroken chain of cause and effect, a 'means' which would

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>57</sup> James Martineau, *The Three Stages of Unitarian Theology: A Sermon, Preached at the Annual Meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in Unity Church, Islington, May 19, 1869* (London, 1869), pp. 11-12.

finally bring about an 'end' which comprised the best possible future in the universe. Thus Price and Priestley emerged from the Calvinism of their youth with two rather different ideas about God, one tinged with uncertainty, the other joyously confident in the omnipotence and virtue of the Deity.

These two different visions of God had profound effects on the formation of their ideas in other respects. Although both their names are synonymous with ideas of liberty, toleration and the spirit of free inquiry, they had two quite different concepts of the nature of freedom itself. Indeed their contrasting opinions about philosophical liberty and philosophical necessity formed the basis of one of the most compelling intellectual arguments of the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup>

As we know, Price completely rejected Calvinist predestinarian doctrines in which man was merely the impotent subject of an all-powerful and arbitrary God. He believed that God was honoured more if he was seen as a parent, guide, governor and judge of 'free beings formed after his own image, with powers of reason and self-determination'.<sup>59</sup> This was entirely preferable, Price wrote, to a perception of the Deity as the operator of a system of conscious machinery or the 'mover and controller of a universe of puppets'.<sup>60</sup> Price's perception of man was more normative and for him man as an individual was a free, rational agent in whom the mind was active. Rather than will and action being the direct mechanistic effects of a motivational cause, Price's view was that the mind determined *itself* according to the motives which were presented to it.

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<sup>58</sup> See Richard Price, *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity, in Correspondence with Joseph Priestley* [London, 1788] Reprint (New York, 1976).

<sup>59</sup> Price, *Free Discussion*, p. 158.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

For Priestley, however, whose idea of the system whereby God's will works in the world was much more *absolute*, the concept of self-determination was impossible because the implication was that it was *not* directly the result of a motivational cause. His conviction was that 'it must have a certain or necessary cause, arising from views of things present to the mind,'<sup>61</sup> otherwise it constituted a break in the all-important causal chain. Price disagreed. To assert self-determination is to claim liberty and, in any case, he asked, 'does it follow that because I am myself the cause, there is no cause?'<sup>62</sup> For Price, self-determination was an active assertion of the mind and not a change of state which had been stamped upon it and over which the mind had no power. Were the latter the case, rather than being the agent, the mind was simply a passive object of agency.<sup>63</sup> For Price, man was a self-motivating being in whom the mind determined its own actions, and in his view Priestley's necessitarian system implied that man was nothing more than a machine.<sup>64</sup>

Price always believed that his friend's system carried with it the idea that man was a passive recipient of natural and physical causes who had no choice of action. Priestley, however, had always insisted that he was not a determinist and that his necessitarian system did not inhibit the freedom of man to make his own decisions and plot his own course. Priestley's core doctrine was founded upon his belief that man was part of a great interconnected chain of cause and effect established and directed by God and subject to God's plan. The rules of

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 135-136.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 342.



the system were that ‘the same consequences should invariably result from the same circumstances’.<sup>65</sup> Given that this was the case, a particular cause would always produce the same effect and consequently the connection between cause and effect ‘is concluded to be *invariable*, and therefore *necessary*’.<sup>66</sup>

It followed, Priestley wrote, that ‘This chain of causes and effects cannot be broken’.<sup>67</sup> Should it ever be the case that this should take place the very argument for the existence of God would be undermined. God would not be able to foresee what would happen to his creation, and therefore could not provide for it. If Price’s doctrine, that of philosophical liberty, which breaks the causal chain were indeed true, it would undermine ‘the whole foundation of *divine providence* and moral government’,<sup>68</sup> for then God would not retain the power to guide us to the future.

Priestley argued, however, that man was not necessarily a passive creature deprived by the scheme of necessity of choice with regard to his own actions. Men could do and think whatever they pleased ‘both with respect to the operations of their minds, and the motions of their bodies’.<sup>69</sup> He wrote that ‘I allow to man all the liberty, or power, that is possible in itself’.<sup>70</sup> His point was that although man was free to choose his path he was nevertheless subject to

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<sup>65</sup> Priestley, *Philosophical Necessity*, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* See also Priestley’s ‘mentor’ David Hartley, *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty and His Expectations* (London, 1834), Part 2, pp. 357-358. Hartley wrote that, ‘the voluntary powers are all generated according to the law of association, which law operates in a mechanical, necessary way and admits of no variations, while the circumstances remain the same....These requisites are therefore inconsistent with philosophical liberty, inasmuch as this implies, that though there be a desire sufficient to cause the exertion of the will, this exertion may or may not follow....[and] man will be rendered less able to comply with the will of God thereby, and that it will not add to, but take away from, the requisites proposed by religion.’

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

the limitations imposed by nature and by God's design. To illustrate this point, Priestley used the river analogy devised by the seventeenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who had described the scheme of necessity as being like water descending a channel. It would be ludicrous, Priestley agreed, to imagine that the water was somehow un-free because it could not *ascend* the channel. This it could not do because it was not designed by nature to be capable of such a feat. The impediment to the water *ascending* the channel was within the water itself, and consequently the circumstances were not conducive to it behaving in any other way than it naturally did.<sup>71</sup>

It was the same with mankind. Although man has everyday choices, whatever direction he takes in life he cannot actually behave in any other way than he was intended by God to do. In Priestley's mind the engine of God's design was represented by the mechanistic causal chain of the scheme of necessity. Within this framework, however, man's conduct would be as a human being who acts upon his 'view of things' and his own 'disposition of mind'.<sup>72</sup>

Priestley, like the American theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), was trying to reconcile the Calvinist idea of God's will, his sovereignty and his plans for mankind with individual freedom. It had long been argued by anti-Calvinists that if the doctrine of predestination was valid, then man could never possess free will, could not be responsible for his actions and therefore could commit sin with impunity. In his work *Freedom of the Will*, published in 1754, in

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

what is now known as the 'Compatibility Thesis',<sup>73</sup> Edwards countered this view. He proposed that there was no conflict between God's plan for the world and individual moral responsibility, although there were obstructions imposed by nature. A simple example would be that of an animal who does not possess the qualities which make it possible for the creature to make moral judgements. In the same way humans had their own limitations, with regard to 'such necessity as men are under through the force of natural causes'.<sup>74</sup>

Priestley's mentor, the philosopher David Hartley (1705-1757), put it rather differently, but one may detect the similarity of his analysis of these concepts of freedom. Hartley proposed that in the discussion of human freedom there were two different languages. One was popular and practical and concerned with everyday use in which an individual was held responsible for his actions, the other was philosophical and related more to complex ideas, processes and objectives.<sup>75</sup> While in the popular language, wrote Hartley, man was judged for the 'right and wrong use of his voluntary powers', at the end of the day 'the actions of man proceed ultimately from God, the one universal cause'. It was absurd, he added, to think that we could mix these two languages.<sup>76</sup>

Accordingly, Priestley's ideas tried to reconcile individual moral responsibility and Divine sovereignty. Man had the power to choose his own path, but ultimately it was granted to God alone the absolute power and will to bring about perfection in the world, and this was the most vital truth for Priestley. For Price, the

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<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, (eds.) Arnold Kaufman and William Frankena (Indianapolis and New York, 1969), p. xvii.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 1,4, p. 24.

<sup>75</sup> Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature* (New York, 1999), pp. 197-198.

<sup>76</sup> Hartley, *Observations*, Part 2, Chap. 1, Prop. xv, pp. 358-360.

essence of philosophical liberty lay in man's ability to make his own individual decisions, and it was this exclusively normative idea of man's place in the scheme of things which was, for Price, the essential truth.

Priestley's scheme of necessity was intrinsic to other aspects of his thought. The idea of a continuous chain of cause and effect in theological terms he expanded into two other areas, those of psychology and natural philosophy. Consequently, the necessitarian scheme carried profound implications for Priestley's ideas about moral philosophy, and for his important conclusions on the nature of matter, both of which differed radically from those of Richard Price.

Priestley and Price were as concerned as any other eighteenth century thinkers to discover the sources of moral knowledge. The search for the epistemological foundation of ethics was committed to discovering an answer to the question as to whether, when one performed a certain action, one was impelled by sense experience, feeling, intuition or reason. The first of these possible sources was elevated in importance in this period by the fact that an important feature of English Enlightenment thought was philosophical empiricism, which was the belief that all ideas, including moral ideas, were obtained from the impressions of sense which originated in the external world. The various forms of empiricism which emerged in eighteenth century thought may be traced to Locke's argument against the concept of innate ideas in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, published in 1690.

Common to all empiricist theories was the rejection of *substance*, which was the notion of the existence of a primary reality, a reality which was self-

sustaining. Joseph Priestley's moral theory belonged to the Lockean empiricist tradition, while that of Richard Price was founded upon the idea that human intuition and reason could access an objective source of moral knowledge. Price's ideas therefore rejected pure empiricism to assert that moral knowledge was gained from a rational faculty which existed independently of the senses. It is within this area of their thought that may be discerned tendencies towards dualism in Price and monism in Priestley.

Priestley responded naturally to the work of David Hartley, most of whose propositions he adopted in full.<sup>77</sup> Hartley, following the empiricist system of Locke, expounded the theory that all mental phenomena, including moral knowledge, could be explained by the association of ideas. Hartley wrote that all the pleasures and pains of sensation, imagination, ambition, and sympathy, would actually *create* in man a moral sense which carried with it its own authority and 'all reasoning, as well as affection, is the mere result of association'.<sup>78</sup> It was in the work of David Hartley that Priestley found the ideal *mechanism* to convert his own ideas into a theory of moral progress, for Priestley was attracted to the unbroken cohesion of the idea of association and the simplicity of the hypothesis.<sup>79</sup> All this was based upon the empiricist doctrine of the impressions of sense as the source of knowledge, the key concepts of which were common to both Hartley and Priestley.

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<sup>77</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind* (London, 1775). Priestley was enthusiastic about virtually every aspect of Hartley's system, apart from his theory of vibrations. Priestley abandoned this because he perceived in it the dualist nature of Hartley's thought on this point. See the discussion below.

<sup>78</sup> Hartley, *Observations*, pp. 311-313.

<sup>79</sup> Priestley, *Hartley's Theory*, p. xxiv.

The reasoning behind the whole system which Priestley adopted from David Hartley was that since men were all products of nature they were all designed in a similar way and were therefore equally responsive to the action of circumstance. Accordingly, wrote Priestley 'the distinction between things natural and moral intirely ceases on the scheme of necessity'.<sup>80</sup> The improvement of man's moral ideas was dependent on a process which was simultaneously natural and mechanical and directed by God. The process, which operated in tandem with the laws of natural philosophy, in time would facilitate the smoothing away of all particular differences of attitude and behaviour. Accordingly, Leslie Stephen's opinion of Hartley was that 'He seeks to do for human nature what Newton did for the solar system. Association is for man what gravitation is for the planets'.<sup>81</sup>

The knowledge of virtue would come about by means of a process of abstraction in which the particulars of sense coalesced into general, universal laws. According to Priestley, so 'exquisite' is the structure of our minds, 'that a whole group of ideas shall so perfectly coalesce into one, as to appear but a simple idea'.<sup>82</sup> These simple ideas became abstract and it was these moral abstractions which then guided man's behaviour.<sup>83</sup> Thus for Hartley and Priestley moral knowledge was distilled from man's sense experience into a general law which would be 'found to govern both the material and intellectual

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>81</sup> Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1881), vol. 2, p. 66.

<sup>82</sup> Priestley, *Hartley's Theory*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>83</sup> Barbara Bowen Oberg, 'David Hartley and the Association of Ideas', *JHI*, vol. xxxvii, 1976, p. 446.

world'.<sup>84</sup> It was the coincidence of all these particular ideas derived from sense experience which *created* the criteria for moral truth and ethical behaviour.

The other important aspect of Priestley's moral system was the highly optimistic assumption that men would associate virtue with pleasure and also with the loftier objectives in life and would eventually reach, with God's help, that state of perfection which was His plan for mankind. All men's better thoughts, of sympathy, virtue and compassion would be intensified by association, and indeed a negative cycle of bad associations could be broken and a fresh start made to re-establish the assumed upward trend in moral improvement. Mankind's association between virtue and joy would result in a cumulative progress in human morality which would remove the concept of absolute evil, because wickedness would be subsumed in the eventual goodness and perfection of human society. All evils were smothered and were therefore 'really and truly annihilated, in the idea of the greater good to which they are subservient'.<sup>85</sup>

This theory leaves itself open to the criticism that in Priestley's moral system there was too much emphasis upon the action of the mechanism alone and too much confidence in a natural propensity in man to choose a virtuous path. Moreover, the establishment of moral knowledge from a source comprised of the impressions of sense alone indicates that in the Priestley-Hartley system, moral truth lost its absolute, ontological and objective reality.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, there may be room for argument that philosophical empiricism and sense impression

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<sup>84</sup> Priestley, *Hartley's Theory*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>85</sup> Priestley, *Philosophical Necessity*, p. 110.

<sup>86</sup> Oberg, 'David Hartley', pp. 450-451.

as the fundamental sources of moral knowledge, inevitably courted the influence of circumstance and particular contexts, implying a tendency towards moral relativism. This tendency was averted, however, by the emphasis of both thinkers on two crucial factors which justified the use of the associationist mechanism to form a moral law. The first of these factors was the general assumption that all mankind would equate virtue with pleasure and that this would lead inexorably to the formation of a general moral law. The other was the belief that God worked directly on the mind of all in furtherance of his Divine plan.

The concept of a series of associationist connections within the human mind fitted neatly with that aspect of Priestley's thought which favoured the necessitarian idea of an unbroken chain of cause and effect. Hartley himself made the link between the two, writing that several years after he had begun his inquiries he realised that necessity 'followed from that of association'.<sup>87</sup> Priestley too brought together the ideas of necessity, virtue and association when he spoke of 'volition ... as preceded and directed by motives' and of 'any thing moral' and 'any thing that could be the proper object of praise or blame'.<sup>88</sup> Clearly, Priestley believed that the necessitarian system worked well alongside the associationist concepts he learned from Hartley's psychological approach. The direct influence of God upon humankind in the scheme of necessity was extended into the idea of the associationist mechanism which brought about moral progress due to the influence of the Deity and to man's propensity to

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<sup>87</sup> Hartley, *Observations*, p. iv.

<sup>88</sup> Priestley, *Philosophical Necessity*, p. 103.



choose good over evil. Thus the association of ideas, moral progress and the system of necessity all interlocked together very neatly.

The idea that there was an inductive process whereby general moral laws were abstracted from sense impressions was not one which was shared by Richard Price. Neither did he agree with Priestley's notion that the source of moral knowledge lay within a natural context, for he argued that actions proceeding from natural instinct had less moral value than those produced by rational reflection.<sup>89</sup> In his analysis of eighteenth century moral thought, D.D. Raphael classed Price together with the theologian Samuel Clarke and the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid (1710-1796).<sup>90</sup> Raphael's opinion was that these three thinkers were similar because they all rejected pure empiricism in favour of the intuitionist view that moral knowledge is gained by a rational faculty which existed independently of the senses. For Price sense could not be the arbiter of sense itself and consequently there must be some power within man that was superior to sense. Sense, Price wrote, was limited because it presented only particulars to the mind and could not grasp general ideas. That was left to the intellect, which examined, compared, and rose to the understanding of abstract concepts.<sup>91</sup>

Price's contention was that the ability to create abstract ideas was innate and it was a power of intuition and reflection within us which was capable of

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<sup>89</sup> Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 105.

<sup>90</sup> D.D. Raphael, *The Moral Sense* (London, 1947), pp. 1-2.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

discerning the moral truth.<sup>92</sup> For Price, then, moral truth was to be discovered in a necessary, immutable, objective source which existed independently of sense. D.O. Thomas suggests Samuel Clarke and the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) were powerful influences on the youthful Price and contributed much to his idea of moral knowledge.<sup>93</sup> Samuel Clarke defended the idea of an absolute, eternal source of moral truth, as did Cudworth, and both of them subscribed also to the notion that this objective truth existed independently of God's will.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, Price upheld the view that there must be an objective source of moral rectitude which is a universal law, and also argued the anti-Calvinist position that this law should also apply to God as 'the source and guide of all the actions of the Deity himself'.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, like both Clarke and Cudworth, who believed that the will was 'a blind and dark thing',<sup>96</sup> neither did Price think that morality had its roots in voluntarism, for the will and the emotions were too arbitrary to be the basis of ethics, and, 'No will...can render any thing good and obligatory, which was not so...from eternity'.<sup>97</sup> Rather, the foundations of moral knowledge were to be discovered in a necessary truth accessible to man's intuition, a truth which was an immutable moral substance. Price wrote that

morality is fixed on an immoveable basis, and appears  
not to be, in any sense factitious; or the arbitrary production

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<sup>92</sup> Richard Price, *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* (London, 1787), pp. 29-30. See also Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 53.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (London, 1731), p. 34, quoted by Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 28.

<sup>95</sup> Price, *Review*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>96</sup> Cudworth, *Immutable Morality*, p. 35.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

or any power human or divine; but equally everlasting and necessary with all truth and reason.<sup>98</sup>

Thus for Richard Price, the source of moral knowledge, which was accessible to man's innate rational intuition, was unchangeable, founded upon necessary truths about virtue and reason and was a source which had always existed and which was everlasting. His view was that this source was something objective, self-existent, pre-existent and independent of the influence of sense impressions. Contrastingly, the source of moral knowledge in Priestley's thought was derived from the impressions of sense which, by means of the necessitarian and associationist mechanisms, coalesced into a general moral law. The moral law in Priestley was a created thing which came into being through human sense perception. Price's ideas about the eternal immutable, pre-existent source of moral knowledge would have been congruent with his beliefs as an Arian about the pre-existence of Christ. His conviction was that Christ was a being who had pre-existed his time on earth and as such was divine and separate in ontological terms from ordinary humankind. These characteristics of Price's ideas give a clear indication that the fundamental structure of his thought was dualist in nature.

For Priestley, however, the moral law came into being through sense. It was moulded under God's direct influence on the mind of man by the unbroken chain of mechanisms which comprised the system of necessity and by the human psychological operations of association. This favoured a more cohesive concept of the homogeneity of God, man and nature, suggesting a monist view of

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<sup>98</sup> Price, *Review*, p. 79.

existence. The scheme of necessity, which, as we have seen, underpinned the theory of association and was an important factor in Priestley's moral theory, also evolved as a fundamental element in his general frame of mind and one which connected to all other key aspects of his thought. Emphasising their interdependence on one another, Priestley wrote that

it is my firm persuasion, that the three doctrines, of materialism, of that which is commonly called Socinianism, and of philosophical necessity are equally parts of one system, being equally founded on just observations of nature, and fair deductions from the scriptures<sup>99</sup>

From this it is clear that Priestley's system was a fusion of philosophy, theology and natural philosophy, and the doctrine of philosophical necessity, which complements his theories on the homogeneity of God and man, is closely tied to his ideas on the nature of matter.

It is when this particular aspect of the intellectual positions of Priestley and Price is considered that the tendencies of the two thinkers towards monism and dualism come into even sharper definition. The ideas of Priestley the Socinian, who did not believe in the immateriality of the soul or the notion of Christ as a pre-existent being, and of Price the Arian, who believed in both these things, were both closely related to the natural philosophy of the time. Priestley's theories about the homogeneity of man, God and nature, which were

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<sup>99</sup> Joseph Priestley, 'The History of the Philosophical Doctrine Concerning the Origin of the Soul and the Nature of Matter with its Influence on Christianity, Especially with respect to the Doctrine of the Pre-Existence of Christ; Being a Sequel to the Disquisitions Concerning Matter and Spirit', in *Disquisitions*, pp. 241-356, quoted at p. 356. This section serves as a sequel to the larger work, *Disquisitions*. See chapter 3 below.

complimentary to his doctrine of necessity, were conducive to a more monist position which recognised no gulf between the material and the immaterial.

Priestley's concept of matter was new and original and resulted in a monist perception of reality. This came into being by means of his clever manipulation of the ideas of the Serbo-Croatian Jesuit mathematician Roger Joseph Boscovich (1711 – 1787). Priestley adopted the theory of matter presented by Boscovich in his *Theoria Philosophiae Naturalis*, published in 1758. The Jesuit had devised a new idea of matter derived from the concept of the Leibnizian unextended monad, which was perceived as the ultimate unit of existence in nature.<sup>100</sup> In Boscovich's theory matter took the form of a *puncta*, or point which served as the focus for the forces of attraction and repulsion. Although this was an entirely new arrangement, Boscovich nevertheless retained in his theory the distinction between material and immaterial which underpinned the matter-spirit dualism which in turn was crucial to his Catholic religious faith.

This particular detail, however, Priestley disregarded, for he had discerned in the Jesuit's theory a way to banish the dualist concept of material and immaterial from the universe for good. Priestley removed the *puncta*, or 'points' entirely, because he wrote that the chance of them impinging on one another was so little that it 'needs not to be considered at all'.<sup>101</sup> It was instead the forces of attraction and repulsion alone that made matter what it was and without them 'it would be nothing at all'.<sup>102</sup> These moves on Priestley's part greatly angered

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<sup>100</sup> Nicholas Rescher, *G.W. Leibniz's Monadology* (London, 1991), pp. 31 ff.

<sup>101</sup> Priestley, *Disquisitions*, p. 23.

<sup>102</sup> Price, *Free Discussion*, p. 244.

Boscovich. Although Priestley had given him appropriate credit for his ideas,<sup>103</sup> Boscovich believed, nevertheless, that his theory had been dangerously distorted. According to Priestley, matter was not an inert, impenetrable substance, for it was composed entirely of the forces of attraction and repulsion and he wrote that 'no part of it appears to be impenetrable to other parts'.<sup>104</sup> With this idea, Priestley believed that the problem of interaction between the material and the immaterial had been eliminated, and that his way was now clear to prove the homogeneity of matter.

Because for Priestley matter was neither solid nor impenetrable, there was no longer any clear division between that which was perceived as material and concepts related to the immaterial, or spiritual. In some ways it is misleading to call Priestley a 'materialist' and indeed 'spirito-materialist' may be a more appropriate description, for indeed he himself wrote that, 'If they chuse to call my matter by the name of spirit, I have no sort of objection'.<sup>105</sup> He pointed out that his contention was for there to be 'such a conjunction of powers in the same thing, or substance'.<sup>106</sup> Clearly, Priestley's thought was characterised by a monist approach to existence, an intellectual position which eliminated the conceptual division between the physical and immaterial and spiritual worlds.

Effectively, Priestley had found an answer to the age-old question of how it was that if matter was held to be solid and impenetrable, it could nevertheless be influenced and guided by immaterial divine powers. In Priestley's view matter

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<sup>103</sup> Priestley, *Disquisitions*, pp. 19-23.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* p. xxxviii.

<sup>105</sup> Price, *Free Discussion*, p. 23.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

was an ever-shifting ebb, flow and perpetual interaction of homogeneous forces of uniform composition,<sup>107</sup> encompassing God man and nature. No one describes the idea of the proximity of the divine and the human in Priestley's thought better than James Martineau, who explained it in terms of threads, all of which 'are interwoven in the same texture, and hold a homogeneous relation to the maker'.

<sup>108</sup> For Priestley the quest for homogenisation and for simplification in all areas of analysis was fundamentally important. This method was consistent with a desire to streamline the relationship between God, man and natural philosophy and to define the elements of existence as homogeneous and having the same basic structure as outlined by his theory of 'spirito-materialism'. The similarity in all areas of Priestley's natural philosophy was a trait correctly described by John G. McEvoy as 'synoptic'.<sup>109</sup>

It was Priestley's monist belief in the homogeneous nature of all matter which undermined his reputation in the field of chemistry.<sup>110</sup> The difficulty was that, in accordance with his passion for the idea of the homogeneity and penetrability of matter and with his tendency towards inductive reasoning, Priestley, believed that his experiments in chemistry would reveal those salient, particular facts which would support his own ideas of general laws governing the nature of reality. He wrote that his chemical work was not simply 'a business of air only', but was of much greater significance in that it would 'diffuse light upon

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<sup>107</sup> Yolton, *Thinking Matter*, p. 114.

<sup>108</sup> James Martineau, *Unitarian Theology*, p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> John G. McEvoy, 'Joseph Priestley, Aerial Philosopher: Metaphysics and Methodology in Priestley's Chemical Thought, From 1762 to 1781: Part One', in *AMB*, vol. 25, March, 1978, p. 5.

<sup>110</sup> There has been much debate in recent decades on the question of the quality of Priestley's natural philosophy, and his chemistry in particular. See McEvoy, 'Joseph Priestley, Aerial Philosopher', p. 1. See also Robert E. Schofield, *The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley: A Study of His Life and Work from 1733 to 1773* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1997), p. 260.

the most general principles of natural knowledge'.<sup>111</sup> His fundamental conviction that his approach to experimentation ought to be in terms of the uniformity of substances and the forces of attraction and repulsion<sup>112</sup> led him to disagree with the conclusions of the French chemist Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier (1743-1794).<sup>113</sup>

The new chemistry of the Frenchman explained phenomena by combinations of many unique substances, and this was a theory which Priestley could not accept.<sup>114</sup> Thus the world moved on and while Lavoisier's theories earned him the title of the 'father of modern chemistry', Priestley's objectivity as a chemist was seriously undermined by his obsession with the homogeneity of existence and the uniformity of matter.

While it is true that Priestley's innovative ideas on the nature of matter fundamentally weakened his chemistry, they nevertheless provided a new perspective on the age-old problem of the relationship between mind and matter.

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<sup>111</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air* (London, 1777), vol. iii, p. ix., quoted by Robert E. Schofield, 'Joseph Priestley, Theology, Physics and Metaphysics,' in *ED*, vol. 2, 1983, p. 78.

<sup>112</sup> Joseph Priestley, Letter to Josiah Wedgwood, 8 December, 1782, quoted by Robert E. Schofield, *Scientific Biography of Joseph Priestley, 1733-1804* (London, 1966), p. 273. Priestley wrote that 'I had also a general idea that if the parts of any body be rarefied beyond the sphere of attraction they will be in a sphere of repulsion to each other'. According to Schofield this is the clearest indication in Priestley's writings of the direct application of Boscovich to his own chemical thought. See also note 116 above. See also Schofield, *Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley*, p. 263.

<sup>113</sup> Priestley, *Different Kinds of Air*, pp. 304-323. Priestley discusses Lavoisier's experiments with air and his ideas about air 'imbibed' with the calces of metal, and points out some of Lavoisier's 'errors'. See esp. pp. 320-323.

<sup>114</sup> As one example of Priestley's disagreements with Lavoisier, see Priestley, *Different Kinds of Air*, vol. 3, section xvi, pp. 304-323. In this passage, Priestley claims that Lavoisier has misinterpreted his own (Priestley's) statements regarding kinds of air. It is interesting to note the tone of undisguised outrage in Priestley's words, for, referring to the Frenchman, he wrote, 'I have been singularly unfortunate with respect to *foreigners*; owing, I suppose, to their not understanding the English language. For it cannot be that philosophers, and those whom I consider as my fellow-labourers in these researches, should have given so little attention to this business, as to have misinterpreted my meaning so grossly as they have done, either through a hasty perusal of my writings, or such an ignorance of the subject, as rendered them incapable of understanding me'; *Ibid.*, p. 304.



As we know, Priestley's conviction was that all matter was composed of the same homogeneous particles subject to the forces of attraction and repulsion. We have, he argued, no reason to suppose that 'there are in man two substances....that have *no common property*'.<sup>115</sup> Mind and matter were the same substance.<sup>116</sup> Mind, simply, was the very same matter only *differently organised*, for sensation or perception, wrote Priestley, '[is] found in conjunction with a certain *organised system of matter*'.<sup>117</sup> Priestley's theory of mind as no more than a different arrangement of homogeneous matter, made it clear that both man's mental and physical activities were equally subject to divine intervention.

Finally, like other materialists, Priestley was eager to argue in favour of a direct causal connection between sense, motivation, will and action. This causal chain was similar to that in older materialist theories such as those of the French encyclopaedist D'Holbach (1723-1789) and his countryman, the physician and philosopher La Mettrie (1709-1751). However, while in these thinkers the denial of a *separate* spiritual state in man served to reinforce their atheism, Priestley's spirito-materialist, monist theology served to achieve the opposite, and that was to bring God and man closer together.

For Priestley, matter as a shifting pattern of forces of attraction and repulsion organised according to its different functions, provided an appropriate vehicle for the causal chain implicit in his ideas of philosophical necessity and association. The power of God's direction flowed effortlessly along a series of unbreakable

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<sup>115</sup> Priestley, *Disquisitions*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

links in a chain of being, and there were no ontological gulfs between God and man or man and nature. Matter was not simply one element of existence separated from the rest by its solidity and impenetrability. As envisaged by Priestley, matter was characterised by its uniformity, whether it took the form of a book, an apple, a good idea or the influence of God. As such, the same 'substance' constituted no less than the *whole* of existence, and the result of this was a truly *monist* perception of reality which encompassed and integrated God, man and the natural world.

In stark contrast, Richard Price's concept of the nature of existence was essentially *dualist*. This was the case for two reasons. Firstly, for Price, matter could not be an active source or substance in its own right, for there had to be a non – arbitrary force controlling the laws of the universe. Secondly, matter could not be penetrable, otherwise there could be no foundation for Newton's laws of motion.

Richard Price was no stranger to the mathematical side of Newtonian thought. He had been taught at Tenter Alley, the leading Dissenting Academy for instruction in natural philosophy, by the distinguished mathematician John Eames, who had been close to Newton and who had inspired Price's passion for applied mathematics.<sup>118</sup> Following Newton, Price believed there had to be a form of necessary truth which existed apart from matter and the material world but nevertheless acted upon it. This truth was derived from an immaterial source and provided order, balance and stability in nature and in the universe. Were it not to exist, so that there was no such thing as 'the constant agency upon it [matter] of

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<sup>118</sup> Thomas, *Honest Mind*, pp. 10-11.

an intelligent and omnipresent spirit,<sup>119</sup> then ‘universal confusion would take place, and all nature fall to pieces’.<sup>120</sup> The concept of *mechanism* alone working in some form of matter which was imbued with its own powers was an idea which supported the blind, the irrational, the random and the arbitrary. Active matter could not be the singular, primary cause of a rational, ordered universe. There had to exist in addition a superior mind, a self-existent immaterial power, to superintend the laws of existence. Thus Price’s vision of existence was one in which a higher, rational, immaterial power acts upon matter in the universe to maintain order and stability.

The matter which was present in this idea of reality had to be solid and impenetrable, otherwise Newton’s laws of motion, upon which ‘All our reasonings about bodies and the whole of Natural philosophy are founded,’<sup>121</sup> would have had no meaning whatsoever. Price wrote that ‘Matter [has to be] figured, moveable...inactive [if it is to be] capable of communicating impulse to other matter’.<sup>122</sup> In other words one body could not impel another unless the matter of which both were composed was inactive, solid and impenetrable. Consequently, Newton’s laws, which were necessary truths, proved the impenetrability of matter and confirmed the impossibility that it could ever be an active force in its own right. Consequently, in Price’s thought there were two separate forms of existence. The first was that which constituted necessary truth and a higher, rational power, both of which are within the realm of the immaterial, which itself

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<sup>119</sup> Richard Price, ‘On Providence’, in *Four Dissertations* (London, 1768), p. 44.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

acts upon matter and superintends all existence. Secondly, there was matter itself, without whose properties of solidity and impenetrability the fundamental laws of the universe which governed its behaviour could never function. Price, consequently, had a *dualist* concept of existence.

These two very different perceptions of reality, the one monist, the other dualist, each related in a complete sense to the two sets of ideas of Priestley and Price on such diverse questions as necessity and philosophical liberty, moral philosophy, the relationship between God and man and, in the realms of natural philosophy, the interaction between the immaterial and material worlds. The two frames of mind represent contrasting conceptual structures, and they have important implications for two remaining areas of their thought, their political theories and religious beliefs.

As advocates of liberty, both thinkers agreed on the requirement for intellectual and religious freedom within any polity. They also both believed that the *sine qua non* of both of these was the establishment of political liberty. For Priestley this meant power over one's own actions, exemption from society's control and the 'power of providing for [our] own advantage and happiness'.<sup>123</sup>

For Price, political freedom was the basis of human progress, and indeed,

Free governments are the only governments which  
give scope to the execution of the powers of men and are  
favourable to their improvement.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Joseph Priestley, 'Essay on the First Principles of Government', 1, quoted by Peter Miller (ed.), *Joseph Priestley: Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 12.

<sup>124</sup> Richard Price, *Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty and the War With America* (1777), p.18, quoted by Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 192.

Although the two thinkers were clearly agreed on the requirement for freedom within the polity however, their ideas differed radically on the *form* government should take. The characteristics of their conclusions about the structure of political systems were consistent with every other aspect of their thought. Priestley believed in the ultimate extinction of the hereditary nobility in favour of a wider political input from society in general which would coalesce into a political will. Like Rousseau, Priestley expressed the view that the idea of having more than *one will* in any state was absurd. The reason for this in Priestley's view was that when any part of government had an absolute negative on the proceedings of the rest 'all public business may be at a stand'.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, he was prepared to uphold the *unicameral* form of the new French constitution because

In every state, as in every single person, there ought to be one will, and no important business should be prevented from proceeding by any opposite will.<sup>126</sup>

In this political statement may be detected the same frame of mind which supported an unbroken chain of cause and effect, as in the doctrine of necessity. Here, in the affairs of the state and the will of the nation, the political structures ought to be seamless and without faction or obstruction and the best vehicle for such a function was the unicameral system. This allowed for a political idea which concurred with Priestley's concepts of homogeneity and uniformity, and one which was in agreement with his unilinear and monist worldview.

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<sup>125</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on History and General Policy, to which is Prefixed an Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life* (London, 1793), p. 230.

<sup>126</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A political dialogue on the general principles of government* (London, 1791) *Works*, XXV, p. 104, quoted by Jenny Graham, 'Revolutionary Philosopher: The Political Ideas of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804): Part 2, *ED*, no. 9, 1990, p. 26.

Contrastingly, Price does not allow such a one-dimensional concept to encroach upon his political system. Price was a federalist. Not only did he wish to retain the federal nature of the new American government,<sup>127</sup> he wrote also of his hopes for a similar structure in Europe. Each separate state would conduct its own internal affairs but there would be appointed a confederacy with representatives from all European states taking the form of a senate which would solve disputes and manage common concerns.<sup>128</sup>

Price also supported the balanced British constitution, with the mixture of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy so highly praised by Montesquieu. He defended it to the extent of calling on the authority of the Royal prerogative to block Fox's East India Bill. Consequently, although Price believed wholeheartedly in representative government, he was happy to include over and above that the House of Lords, an assembly of a 'hereditary council, consisting of men in the first rank of the state'<sup>129</sup> to act as a check on the legislature. Here, in the idea of a collective wisdom which was something inherited rather than created it is possible to detect a similarity in his thought to the self-existent, and indeed pre-existent, source of moral knowledge and authority.

Both the mixed constitution and federalism are political systems which contain the *bicameral* element which suggests the need for checks and balances by a differently constituted, more elevated authority, and they reflect also ideas of order and stability. In such systems, the national will is tempered and balanced

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<sup>127</sup> Thomas, *Honest Mind*, p. 266.

<sup>128</sup> Richard Price, 'Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America', (no page given) quoted by D.O. Thomas (ed), *Richard Price: Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 24-25.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

by the calming voice of wisdom and experience. These principles of equilibrium are also inherent in Newton's concept of the order of the universe and in the rational mechanics of his laws. In addition, they reflect the mathematical cast of Price's own mind and also, by indicating his wish for a separately constituted higher political body, the inherent dualism in his thought.

The notion of the need in the polity for a superior, guiding authority which had developed its own inherent wisdom over the centuries was very similar to that frame of mind which formed the basis of Price's moral and philosophical ideas. His idea of moral knowledge was that it could be intuited from a self-existent, and indeed pre-existent, objective source which formed an unchallengeable higher authority. Furthermore, he conceived of God who was the divine guiding influence on mankind, as existing on a higher, separate, immaterial dimension, the same realm as that of the pre-existent Christ and as that of the spiritual and the human soul. Thus all these characteristics of his thought marked his perspective as essentially a dualist one which recognised another higher authority separate from the material world. Although the political parameters were somewhat different, of course, the concept of an 'upper chamber' which was formed on different terms and tempered the decisions of its 'lower' house did reflect the outlines of these more fundamental tenets. Thus Price's dualism was to be found also in his approach to practical political ideas.

Most importantly of all, however, these two different frames of mind served as strong supports for the theological beliefs of the two thinkers. Their conflicting ideas on the nature of matter, which illustrated Priestley's monism and the

dualism of Price, were directly connected to the Socinianism of the former and the Arianism of the latter. Priestley wrote that the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence was integral to the idea of an immaterial soul in man which was thought by some to be 'altogether independent from the body.'<sup>130</sup> He regarded such concepts of the soul, which supported the Arian belief in the pre-existence of Christ, as the roots of profound distortions of the Christian religion. He insisted that it had been the doctrine of a separate and pre-existent soul derived from oriental and Greek philosophies which had resulted in that most awful corruption of all, a belief in the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, and all the 'popish doctrines and practices'<sup>131</sup> which went with it.

The whole purpose of his work, *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit*, published in 1777, was to attack such notions by presenting instead the theory of the homogeneity of matter which supported his own theological position.<sup>132</sup> His concept of matter was crucial to his theological arguments, for the idea that man was wholly material was a vital factor in his belief in the 'doctrine of the *proper*, or *mere humanity* of Christ'. His contention was that if no man had a separate soul then Christ, who in all other respects appeared as a man, 'could not have had a soul which had existed before the body'.<sup>133</sup>

Priestley's ingenious arguments in defence of his theory of materialism were presented in his *Disquisitions*<sup>134</sup> and also in Price's volume *a Free*

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<sup>130</sup> Priestley, 'Arguments for the Unity of God, in *Tracts*, p. 189.

<sup>131</sup> Price, *Free Discussion*, p. xvii. This quotation comes from the introduction which Priestley wrote for this volume.

<sup>132</sup> See above.

<sup>133</sup> Priestley, 'Origins of the Soul and the Nature of Matter', in *Disquisitions*, p. 355.

<sup>134</sup> Cited above.



*Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity*, published a year later.<sup>135</sup> In the latter volume the two thinkers consolidated the main outlines of what had become an on-going debate. They discussed not only their conflicting ideas on the nature of matter, but also its relationship with other controversial subjects, such as the mortality of the soul, death and resurrection. Despite all the philosophical points which were made, the heart of the argument was theological and reflected two very different sets of ideas about the nature of Christ.

Priestley's aim throughout was to prove that Christ was no more than a human being who had never pre-existed whereas Price's defence of his own Arianism was based upon his concept of the separate soul and a pre-existent Jesus. The debate was conducted with great skill, wit and wisdom. Priestley asserted that virtually every one of the most absurd doctrines of the Christian faith could be traced back to belief in a separate soul and that Christians should then, without concern, leave the topic to philosophers.<sup>136</sup> Price observed that Priestley wished to eliminate the distinction between matter and spirit, in order to destroy what he termed the 'heathenish system of Christianity, by exploding the doctrines of Christ's pre-existence'.<sup>137</sup>

Priestley's idea of a future resurrection of the 'whole man' depended on the belief that none of the matter of which he was composed was lost after death.

<sup>138</sup> This raised many questions, but on one aspect Price made the salient point

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<sup>135</sup> Cited above.

<sup>136</sup> Price, *Free Discussion*, pp. xviii-xix.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

that if the matter of life was simply matter differently organised from matter after death, as Priestley proposed, then it was no less possible for man to have existed ‘ *before his birth* than it is that he should *exist* after his *death*’. <sup>139</sup>

To this powerful point at first it seemed that Priestley’s reply was almost tinged with compromise. In his answer to Price he wrote that, given that man is a ‘material system’, <sup>140</sup> he, Priestley, must therefore believe that the *materials* of which man was made had a pre-existence ‘and, consequently, those of the *man Jesus*’. However, he added that this was a very different kind of pre-existence from that of ‘those who make Christ...to have pre-existed in an active state’. <sup>141</sup> Priestley asserted that a hypothesis such as this could never have given rise to such corruptions of the Christian religion which were derived from the notion that Christ had pre-existed in such a form before his appearance on earth.

For Price, however, Christ had existed before his appearance in the world ‘in a state of dignity and glory’. <sup>142</sup> He contended that that the material universe was the lowest part of created existence and designed only as ‘ the seat and receptacle of living and spiritual beings’ <sup>143</sup> who rise above one another ‘ in endless gradation from the oyster to the one Supreme’. <sup>144</sup> Man is only one link in this chain of being, which is filled with an infinite variety of different classes of creatures and therefore ‘Who can doubt whether all *above* us is alike full. – Let us here think of the possible dignity of superior, intelligent beings’. <sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Price, *Sermons on the Christian Doctrine* ( London, 1787), p. 106.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-123.

According to Price, the Socinian doctrine of Christ's simple humanity, when seen in relation to the gospel accounts of his exaltation, was little short of impossible and indeed rendered 'Scripture *unintelligible* [and] Christianity itself *incredible*'.<sup>146</sup> We are told, wrote Price, that after his resurrection Christ became Lord of all heaven and earth, with even the angels subject to him. He would raise the dead, judge the world and confer eternal happiness on the virtuous, punishing the wicked with *everlasting destruction*. Is it credible or even possible 'that a mere man could be advanced at once so high as to be above angels, and to be qualified to rule and judge this world'?<sup>147</sup>

Clearly, although Price and Priestley were both considered radical religious thinkers of their time, they were at odds on the question of the nature of Christ, for although their two points of view both took anti-Trinitarian positions, they were also in conflict with one another. Crucially, these two different theological positions of Price and Priestley manifested in terms of religious belief two fundamentally different frames of mind, one dualist, and the other, that of Priestley, monist.

In conclusion, Price's stance on philosophical liberty and Priestley's position on philosophical necessity defined the terms of the two opposing intellectual positions which created this clear division in eighteenth century radical thought. Granting to man alone the central role of self-determination in relation to his actions, Price broke the chain of cause and effect which was so important to Priestley's concept of God working in the world. The seamlessness of Priestley's

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

worldview showed itself once again in his system of moral philosophy. The necessitarian scheme married well with the associationist method of David Hartley and this mechanism was responsible for the uninterrupted consolidation of the particulars of sense into a form of moral awareness ultimately derived from empiricism. Contrastingly, Price believed that moral knowledge lay in a source which was separately and differently constituted, and which was eternal, immutable and had always existed, and consequently owed nothing to the impressions of sense.

In turn, these two sets of ideas about moral awareness reflected similar structures in their thought concerning the nature of matter. Priestley's new concept of matter encompassed both the spiritual and the material. Far from being one identifiable element in existence, matter, defined as forces of attraction and repulsion, encompassed the whole of existence, and it was this theory which showed with great clarity the monism of Priestley's position. Conversely, Price remained firm that matter as such was solid, impenetrable and, according to Newton's laws of motion, acted upon by immaterial forces. Consequently, there is in Price a dualist theme which may be detected in other aspects of his thought.

Price's dualism was repeated in his writings on political structures. His preference was for federal or mixed constitutions in which the final outcome of decision-making was balanced between democratic will and the guidance of the wisdom and experience of a differently constituted 'upper house'. By contrast, Priestley's political thought was concerned with a unicameral system which tolerated no opposing view and channelled seamlessly the 'one will' of the nation.

In turn, all these aspects of the thought of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley reflected their theological positions. Price's idea of the immortality of the soul was consistent with his Arianism and his view of Christ as a pre-existent being. Priestley's concept of matter as uniform and homogeneous provided a firm basis for arguments in favour of his Socinianism, which supported the idea of Christ as only human. Every aspect of the thought of Richard Price was characterised by dualism in that it favoured, in his moral philosophy, his concept of matter, his politics and his idea of the nature of Christ, a differently constituted higher authority and a separate, immaterial dimension. Price's thought in some senses was hierarchical, providing for various grades of existence from that of the humblest material form to that of the highest intellectual, spiritual and immaterial. By contrast, the thought of Joseph Priestley, was monist, unilinear and seamless, characterised by the idea of a great chain of cause and effect. It conceived of an unbroken flow of existence which accommodated God, man and nature, mind and body, life and death, within his new monist system of 'spirito-materialism'.

Priestley worked tirelessly to use eighteenth century philosophy and natural philosophy to prove that Christ was no more than a mere man. He did this because he was firmly convinced that to think otherwise was to lend credence to the greatest corruption ever perpetrated on the Christian religion, and that was the idea of the pre-existence of Christ. Although he was a polymath, Priestley's theology was for him the most important area of investigation during his lifetime. In his efforts to underpin the outlines of his Socinian beliefs with natural philosophy he was instrumental in the evolution of a particular form of radical

thought which differed fundamentally from that of his friend and fellow radical. Priestley's ideas, however mechanical they were, represented a holistic viewpoint and a monist understanding of existence which favoured a union of spiritual and material. It was this vision which enabled him to support his passionate belief that Christ had been no more than human. In his justification of Socinianism by means of eighteenth century natural philosophy Priestley had effectively taken a radical form of religious belief and had integrated it with a unique frame of mind which was monist in all respects.

The Priestleyan system dominated Unitarianism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was a theological and philosophical approach which attempted to draw together the Divine, the human and the natural world into the same frame of existence. It was a rationalisation of theology and a complete integration of man, his moral knowledge, his wants and desires, into the natural world. The key to the system was the uniformity of the essence of existence and the seamlessness of its function, for it was without ontological divisions.

Priestley's philosophical and theological system was one major aspect of the context of Unitarianism from which the critic and historian John Kenrick emerged in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### REASON, RELIGION AND THE ORIGINS OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS.

The monist concept of existence developed by Joseph Priestley was one important aspect of Unitarian thought related to the context which helped to shape the early ideas of John Kenrick. The second element of the intellectual tradition in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which contributed to the contextual framework from which Kenrick emerged was the evolution of the Socinian propensity for historical biblical criticism.

Having tried to prove within the framework of the natural philosophy of his age that Jesus Christ had been nothing more than a man, and having attempted to justify his Socinian ideas within these terms, Priestley turned his attention to historical biblical criticism to find additional evidence to support the case in favour of his belief in Christ's simple humanity. The two evidential sources, one related to natural philosophy and the other to a historical approach, were examined closely in pursuit of the need to establish the truth about the Christian faith at the time of its origins and with that, the belief that Christ had been only human. In Priestley's view Christianity had been a pure and simple faith before it was tainted by the 'corruptions' of Greek philosophy which in turn helped to form the doctrinal distortions of subsequent ages. Priestley wrote that

it is only by purging away the whole of this *corrupt*  
*leaven*, that we can recover the pristine simplicity and

purity of our most excellent and truly rational, though much abused, religion. <sup>1</sup>

This quotation comes from a section of Priestley's preface to his *Disquisitions*, in which he justified the inclusion in that work of a *Sequel* devoted to a historical account of heathen views on the pre-existence of the soul. It had been from this source, he believed, that the greatest corruption of all, the idea that Christ had pre-existed his time on earth, had been derived. <sup>2</sup>

This sequel, he wrote, had been composed during his research for *Disquisitions* and indeed 'rose out of it, and is strictly connected with it'.<sup>3</sup> In the sequel he contended that it was due to man's ignorance of God in the early ages of the world that the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul gained ground and it is 'not from theory alone, but from unquestionable *facts*' that this was the case. <sup>4</sup> He analysed the opinions of Eastern religions on the subject of the soul and looked at the influence, particularly of Greek philosophy, on Christian beliefs. When his historical – theological work, *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* was published five years later, in 1782, this particular sequel was mentioned once again in the preface to that publication. At this juncture Priestley wrote that he considered the whole of it as part of the plan of *Corruptions* 'and essential to

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated* [1777], Reprint (New York, 1976), p. xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxvi. The full title of the sequel is 'The History of the Philosophical Doctrine concerning the Origin of the Soul, and the Nature of Matter with its Influence on Christianity, especially with respect to the Doctrine of the Pre-existence of Christ, being a sequel to the Disquisitions Concerning Matter and Spirit,' in *Disquisitions*, pp. 241-356.

<sup>3</sup> Priestley, *Disquisitions*, p. xxvi.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.



the principal object of it'.<sup>5</sup> Thus this particular section, which was essentially historical, was, in Priestley's own mind, equally relevant for inclusion in either his philosophical or his historical-theological works. Consequently, regarding the nature of the soul and that of Christ himself, Priestley's thoughts in terms of natural philosophy and in history were complementary to one another in the sense that both were rational tools in his elimination of the ideas which he believed had corrupted what had originally been a pure and primitive Christian faith.

The objective of this chapter is to examine some aspects of the emergence of historical-biblical criticism from the radical English Enlightenment. The aim is firstly; to sketch briefly, through the work of some earlier writers, the development of aspects of radical thought in terms of historical biblical scholarship in the decades prior to Priestley; secondly, to look more closely at Priestley's own contribution to the radical tradition of biblical interpretation in a historical sense; thirdly, to examine the approach of some post-Priestleyan critics who were also Socinians ; and lastly to consider the method in biblical scholarship of their successor, the classical historian John Kenrick, and to discover to what extent he may be placed within the same tradition.

There are several themes and perspectives which are crucial to the discussion. Of major importance is the gradual erosion of commitment to the doctrine of plenary, or verbal inspiration of the scriptures,<sup>6</sup> for by its very nature

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (London, 1871), p. xiii. This edition was reprinted in one volume.

<sup>6</sup> William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 3-4. According to the idea of plenary, or verbal inspiration, the work of the Holy Spirit is so sensitive that it even results in the

as a belief in scripture as the actual word of God, this doctrine is usually at odds with rational historical investigation. Clearly, from a Unitarian perspective, the idea of the inerrancy of scripture as a theological principle, a notion which assisted in the defence of orthodox doctrines, came into some conflict with what they saw as a rational, historical interpretation of the Bible, for the historian was likely to discover evidence about the past which would differ from the biblical narrative. Ted Letis goes further, however, and maintains that the doctrine of biblical inspiration was *the* major barrier to historical criticism.<sup>7</sup>

Another important aspect to be considered is the complexity of the different perspectives which were employed in the understanding of the past itself and of the historical biblical criticism of the time. Of relevance is the way in which the secular history which related to the life of Christ was used to verify the truth of the scriptural accounts themselves. Also, there is the idea of the historical development of doctrine which is closely related to the argument expressed in Priestley's *Corruptions*. This work presented the idea that the original Christian message had been corrupted over time by the formation of doctrines which had emerged from the contextual intellectual, philosophical and cultural circumstances of later ages. These 'corruptions' had to be removed and the pure, original form of Christian belief recovered. The biblical historian then had to shift the angle of his perspective to confirm the truth of this simple Christianity against the background of the customs and beliefs of the time in

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choice of one word rather than another. Thus, writes Abraham, the guidance extended to the writers' choice of terminology and consequently the words in the Bible are genuinely the very words of God himself.

<sup>7</sup> Ted Letis, 'From Sacred Text to Religious Text : An Intellectual History of the Impact of Erasmian Lower Criticism on Dogma As a Contribution to the English Enlightenment and the Victorian Crisis of Faith', Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Edinburgh, 1995, p. 292.

which it came into being. In this way the historical method would establish the origins of this simple, uncorrupted faith and prove its validity historically.

Consequently, there are to be considered several different configurations of the relationship between the scriptural narrative, history and doctrine.

The Socinian belief in the simple humanity of Christ was a vital element in the rise of historical criticism. Given that Jesus was no more than human then he was part of human history and his words and actions could be understood more clearly in that context. This reflects the tendency in this period of a drift *away* from doctrinal systems, theological presuppositions, and abstract metaphysically-founded concepts and *towards* a rational, concrete historical approach to the interpretation and understanding of scripture. In the spirit of Rational Dissent there was the idea that scripture contained its own truth, which would be discovered in the spirit of free and rational inquiry and that this truth could not be 'bent' or accommodated to any particular form of doctrine or belief.

The overall contention of this chapter is that all these factors, the diminished belief in plenary inspiration, the removal of the 'corruptions' of Christianity, the desire to seek out and illuminate the historical origins of a pure Christian faith, the unshakeable conviction that Christ was a mere man and a drift away from abstract doctrinal systems, were to be found in the world view of Socinians in the Priestley tradition. This meant that they were in theological and intellectual terms in a unique position to carry out a rational historical interpretation of the Bible.

A strictly rational approach to the scriptures had been initiated by John Locke, who touched upon several of these themes. Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration*, published in 1689 was, according to B.W. Young, the founding text of the anti-dogmatic tradition which became characteristic of the earlier eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Indeed Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures*, published six years later, in 1695, presented the idea that all one needed to be a Christian was a simple belief that Jesus was the Messiah. Defending the integrity of scripture, Locke wrote that the unbiased should read it without 'such learned, artificial and forced senses of them, as are ... put upon them, in most of the systems of divinity'.<sup>9</sup>

Christianity could not be improved upon by those who constructed systems of doctrine. It was wrong, he added, to 'cull out, as best suits our system' either a period or verse and to regard them as aphorisms and make them 'the fundamental articles of the Christian faith'.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the scriptures should be regarded as a 'collection of writings, designed by God, for the instruction of ... mankind', and should be understood in the plain meaning of the words used by the speakers according to the 'language of that time and country wherein they lived'.<sup>11</sup> Here Locke saw no contradiction between the word of God in the scriptures and the language of man in a specific historical context and indeed with regard to the question of inspiration he revealed that he knew 'no other

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<sup>8</sup> B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century England; Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1999), p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> John Locke, 'The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures', in *The Works of John Locke*, 10 vols [1823], Reprint (Darmstadt, 1963), vol. vii, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

infallible guide, but the Spirit of God in the Scriptures'.<sup>12</sup> Thus Locke advised against any preconceived ideas regarding the meaning of scripture, and recognised the importance of reading it against the background of the context in which it was written.

On the question of inspiration, neither did the scholar of Old Dissent, Philip Doddridge (1702-1752) perceive a tension between the two. Doddridge, who was highly influential in the emergence of the Dissenting Academies, studied from 1719 until 1723 at Kibworth Academy, Leicestershire, under the Independent John Jennings. Jennings encouraged free inquiry into all shades of belief, from orthodox Calvinism on the one hand to radical Socinianism on the other. In 1729 Doddridge began an academy of his own in Northampton at which he established a radical style of teaching in the Jennings mould and this tradition was carried on into the Dissenting academy at Daventry. At the beginning of his career, in 1724, Doddridge described himself as a 'moderate Calvinist', and although he admitted 'wavering' towards Arianism on some theological points, this he remained until the end of his life.<sup>13</sup>

Although he did understand inspiration as functioning on various levels,<sup>14</sup> Doddridge believed in plenary inspiration and he wrote that it should make a great impression upon us, 'to think that we have such a book; a book, written by a full divine inspiration...a most authentic and unerring account of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Gordon, *Addresses Biographical and Historical* ( London, 1922 ), pp. 195-196.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Doddridge, *A Dissertation on the Inspiration of the New Testament, As Proved by the Facts Recorded in the Historical Books of It. To Which is Added a Sketch of the Arguments by Which the Inspiration of the Old Testament may be proved in the Easiest Method* (London, 1793), pp. 6-10.

...important...facts'.<sup>15</sup> This, he insisted, surely contradicted the opinions of some who argued that the historical works of the New Testament could have been written without any divine assistance at all. Doddridge argued that it was in fact *because* these works of scripture were so accurate in historical terms, not only with regard to events and circumstances, but also in relation to Christ's actual works and doctrine, that they *had to have been inspired*. No ordinary men, without the help of divine inspiration, could have done such an expert job.<sup>16</sup> Thus for Doddridge, the truth of the historical proved that the doctrine of inspiration itself was valid. There was no sense here as yet, as there was emerging in some more radical theological circles at the time, that plenary inspiration and the historical interpretation of the scriptures did not rest easy with one another.

A questioning view on the question of plenary, or verbal, inspiration was expressed, albeit in rather subtle terms, by Nathaniel Lardner, whose controversial treatise, *Letter on the Logos*, persuaded Joseph Priestley to become a Socinian.<sup>17</sup> In the preface to the first volume of his massive historical work, *The Credibility of the Gospel History*, which was produced in the years 1727-1757 and was intended to verify the authenticity of the books of the New Testament by citing both secular and sacred writers, he wrote that

no one may hence surmise, that I give up the inspiration of the books of the New Testament. Nor am I aware, that I have in the lest weakened any argument, that they were written under a special direction and influence of the Spirit

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-46.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter two, above.

of God. I think, however, that if the Gospel – History be credible, the truth of the Christian Religion cannot be contested.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, Lardner wished to dampen any criticism of his perceived neglect of the doctrine of inspiration and this was accompanied by an assurance as to the successful outcome of the historical method in defending Christianity. He appears aware that there was some tension between belief in the doctrine of inspiration and the historical approach, but has, by the rather subtle juxtaposition of the two statements, given the last word to history.

Almost three decades later, however, in his discussion of the *Case of the Demoniacs, Mentioned in the New Testament*, which was published in 1758, Lardner stated some of his opinions more openly.<sup>19</sup> In this particular piece of work his opinion was that the idea of possession by evil spirits was a common belief at the time,<sup>20</sup> and that the truth was that such afflictions were caused very probably by ‘bodily distempers and indispositions’.<sup>21</sup> This ancient belief was like others, such as the notion of early Christians that the earth was flat, which had been discredited in the light of modern knowledge. In a similar vein, Lardner wrote of the idea of verbal inspiration that he did not consider those enemies

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<sup>18</sup> Nathaniel Lardner, *The Credibility of the Gospel History, or, The Facts Occasionally Mentioned in the New Testament Confirmed by Passages of Ancient Authors, Who were Contemporary with our Saviour or His Apostles, or Lived Near Their Time*, 17 vols (London, 1741), vol. 1, p. x.

<sup>19</sup> Nathaniel Lardner, *The Case of the Demoniacs Mentioned in the New Testament: Four Discourses Upon Mark v.19, with An Appendix For Further Illustrating the Subject* (London, 1758). See esp. Discourse iii, pp. 65 ff. See also William Turner, *Lives of Eminent Unitarians* (London, 1840), vol. 1, p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> Lardner, *Case of the Demoniacs*, Discourse iii, p. 70.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

either of mankind or of the scriptures who 'overthrow the once established opinions...that the Scriptures...only use the common way of speaking'.<sup>22</sup>

This was the kind of inference, wrote the Unitarian biographer William Turner, with which Lardner defended in this work ideas which were 'altogether inconsistent with the notions commonly entertained of what is called the *plenary* inspiration of the sacred writers'.<sup>23</sup> Turner believed that Lardner's response to traditional ideas about the inspiration of the Scriptures became more open and increasingly sceptical during the thirty years, from 1727 to 1757, in which he produced the seventeen volumes of his historical work, *Credibility*. Although Turner's assertion may have been rather exaggerated, it is clear that there was a degree of ambiguity in Lardner's mind on the question of inspiration.

Much more certain was Lardner's clear enthusiasm for historical interpretation as a method of proving the scriptural accounts. He pointed out that the evidence of the truth of any history was both internal and external. In the case of the New Testament these two categories related respectively to what he calls 'Principal' and 'Occasional' facts.<sup>24</sup> The former comprised the story of Christ's life and ministry, while the latter were those historical facts mentioned briefly within that story which connected it to the contemporary historical context. His idea was to verify the truth of the New Testament by scrutinising the work of secular and non-Christian scholars. Their objective observations would support its 'external' history by mentioning those facts, and the customs, events and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> Turner, *Eminent Unitarians*, vol.1, p 151.

<sup>24</sup> Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. 1, pp. v, 3.



circumstances which formed the background to the gospel stories.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently, he extended the boundaries of his scholarship outside the New Testament narrative to include evidence from the secular historical world.<sup>26</sup>

Lardner's *Credibility* was a work of 'no ordinary magnitude',<sup>27</sup> and stood head and shoulders above the efforts of contemporary scholars to follow a similar line of inquiry.<sup>28</sup> It set out to trace, through scholarly testimonies, the trail of historical evidence which proved that the New Testament was genuine, and that the books had been written by those whose names they bore.<sup>29</sup> In a general sense it widened the whole historical perspective on the Christian story. Right from the start, his findings were clear, and in the conclusion to the second volume he wrote that the account given by sacred writers had been confirmed by other ancient authors and he had found nothing in the books of the New

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-7.

<sup>26</sup> Lardner was not the first to produce a work of this nature. Indeed, he was only too eager to give credit to his predecessors this form of historical biblical scholarship. In the preface to his work *A Large Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion* (London, 1764), p. vii, Lardner singles out a treatise by a French Jesuit called Dominique Colonia, entitled *The Christian Religion Confirmed by the Testimonies of Ancient Pagan Authors* (Lyon, 1718). Lardner writes that this work bears a great resemblance to his own and credits Colonia with 'learning and zeal. ..But some allowances must be made for the credulity of his church'. Another work in a similar vein published in France was one by Tobias Eckhard, entitled *The Testimonies of such who are not Christians collected from Ancient Monuments* (Paris, 1722). Three years later, in 1725, was published yet another treatise which presented external evidence of scriptural authority. In chapter 32 of this work, by J.A. Fabricius and entitled *Truth of the Christian Religion*, there appeared a catalogue of Jewish and heathen writers who had supported the truth of Christianity. In 1727 Le Clerc revised Fabricius' work in his own *Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne* and wrote that there were other pagan writers who gave testimonies and described events which could be of great use in confirming the truth of the Christian religion. Two years before the final volume of Lardner's *Credibility* appeared in print, yet another scholarly effort on the same subject was published, in 1755. This was by Gregory Sharpe, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and was entitled *An Argument in Defence of Christianity Taken from the Concessions of the Most Ancient Adversaries, Jews and Pagans, Philosophers and Historians*. Lardner was quick to point out, however, that this was a very small volume of only 166 pages!

<sup>27</sup> Turner, *Eminent Unitarians*, vol.1, p. 139.

<sup>28</sup> See note 19, above.

<sup>29</sup> Turner, *Eminent Unitarians*, vol. 1, pp. 136, 140.

Testament 'unsuitable to the age, in which they are supposed to have been writ'.

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He had, he added, been aware of the difficulty, even for the most cautious scholar, of preventing allusions from his own age to betray his attempts to write about an earlier period in history.<sup>31</sup> However, his view from his findings about the agreement of New Testament writers with other ancient scholars was that the books were genuine and had come down the ages pure and uncorrupted. His firm opinion was that 'If the history of the New Testament be credible, the Christian Religion is true'.<sup>32</sup> Lardner's opinion of history as a tool for verifying the truth of the New Testament accounts had grown in strength and confidence.

This pattern was similar in the work of Lardner's close friend the Arian scholar George Benson (1699-1762),<sup>33</sup> with whom he corresponded regularly on theological matters.<sup>34</sup> Indeed the two critics, despite their differences on doctrinal questions,<sup>35</sup> regularly contributed to the improvement of each other's productions.<sup>36</sup> Benson, who was brought up in a Calvinist family in Cumberland, attended Glasgow University before becoming a Presbyterian minister and a scholar who was highly regarded by his contemporaries. Like some writers of the seventeenth century Benson had modified the doctrine of plenary inspiration to

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<sup>30</sup> Lardner, *Credibility*, vol. 2, (Third Edition, London, 1741), p. 954.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 955.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 959.

<sup>33</sup> Turner, *Eminent Unitarians*, p. 213.

<sup>34</sup> Nathaniel Lardner, Eleven Letters to George Benson, 1743/44 – 1753, JRL ,Unitarian Collection, MS. Box Ben, Cupboard B1/10, Benson Collection 2, See, for example, fols. 84, 89 & 91, the latter being on the subject of infant baptism.

<sup>35</sup> Lardner, of course, was a Socinian, who believed in the simple humanity of Christ. See chapter two, above.

<sup>36</sup> Turner, *Eminent Unitarians*, p. 213.

regard it as a divine intervention which functioned on a much more general basis than the dictation of every word of scripture by God.

Like Lardner, he appreciated the importance of historical biblical criticism and his method bore significant similarities to that of his friend. Clearly, he had learned much from Lardner's ideas and scholarship, for in the index to a volume published by Benson in 1735, and entitled *The History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion*, there were more than fifty references to Lardner's works. In this three volume publication Benson connected the scriptural content of the Acts of the Apostles to the Jewish and Roman history of the time.<sup>37</sup> In the preface to the work he wrote that he had abridged the epistles and that they were 'reduced' as far as was possible to their 'proper times and places'.<sup>38</sup> He considered the circumstances of the churches, or persons to whom they had been written, as well as the immediate occasion of writing them. It was shown therefore 'how exactly they answer the end, for which they were written'.<sup>39</sup> He added that the historical method of carrying down from age to age the divine revelation had advantages 'beyond that of systems, institutes or apostolical canons', for as the scriptures are written

evidence is interwoven with doctrine; promise with precept; advice with threatenings; history with noble reflections, and weighty observations; parables with descriptions; and the best morals illustrated, by the brightest and most

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<sup>37</sup> George Benson, *The History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion: Taken from the Acts of the Apostles, Together with the Remarkable Facts of the Jewish and Roman History; which affected the Christians within this Period* (London, 1756).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iv.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

distinguished examples.<sup>40</sup>

If anything, Benson's perception of the role of history in the interpretation and validation of scripture was even more acute than Lardner's. Lardner's method had been to verify the 'occasional facts' of the gospel stories with evidence from impartial sources, thus adding credibility to the narratives of the New Testament. This was important because it had connected scripture with historical facts from non-Christian sources and indeed Benson attempted an analysis on a similar basis. It does appear from this quotation, however, that Benson understood clearly that rather than being an abstract construction of a 'system of divinity',<sup>41</sup> doctrine was closely linked to the historical context within which the Epistles were written.

Some of the most radical thoughts on the subject, however, came some three decades later from Joseph Priestley. In general terms, Priestley's ideas were pivotal. They were closely linked to the Lockean tradition of radical scholarship which sought to rationalise religion and by doing so to effect an accommodation between reason and faith. However, with the development of Priestley's thought came an intensification and further radicalisation of ideas and along with those an intertwining of many threads of previous radical opinion on the Christian faith. What added weight and significance was the incorporation in his theology of the ideas which he had formed within the context of natural philosophy.<sup>42</sup> Indeed Priestley's system of materialism, moral philosophy and

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. iii.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> See chapter two, above.

theology constituted no less than a reification of radical thought in a highly original way.

The rational criteria with which he approached historical biblical interpretation meant that, along with all the other doctrines of orthodox Christianity, for example original sin, the atonement, the virgin birth, the Trinity and the concept of the immateriality of the soul, all of which had been branded by Priestley as 'corruptions', he rejected also the idea of the plenary, or verbal inspiration of the scriptures. Priestley wrote that this doctrine was 'as great a cause of infidelity as any other'.<sup>43</sup> He pointed out also that the later Platonists<sup>44</sup> themselves were not inclined to dismiss the idea of divine communications as incredible and indeed after the promulgation of Christianity they 'pretended to frequent impulses and inspirations'.<sup>45</sup> By no means did it follow, he contended, that simply because a writer has had some communication with God, that his account of that experience was necessarily entirely dependable. Neither should it be the case that he ought to be thought of as any more wise or knowledgeable than other men.<sup>46</sup>

The credibility of the writers of scripture, he added, should be assessed only with regard to 'the circumstances in which they wrote... the biases to which they might be subject',<sup>47</sup> and their reasoning evaluated in the same way as one would judge that of other men. Indeed the writers of the gospel history are no

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<sup>43</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever* (1787), Part 2, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> It was the 'overlay' of the metaphysical precepts of Greek philosophy which had been the main culprit in establishing some of the 'corruptions' which had distorted the pure, original form of Christianity.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1772), p. 245.

<sup>46</sup> Priestley, *Philosophical Unbeliever*, Part 2, pp. 36-37.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

more than 'credible witnesses' to the events of the time, and the rational defence of this history should be made on that basis, without any regard 'to their supposed inspiration'.<sup>48</sup> With opinions such as these, Priestley revealed the depth of his radicalism in his theological opinions, an element of his thought which has not been fully appreciated by modern historians of ideas.<sup>49</sup> His views on plenary inspiration were in stark contrast to those at the opposing end of the spectrum. The Anglican divine and evangelical Thomas Scott, for example, wrote in 1796 that 'On every account...we have good reason, independently of ancient *opinion*, to receive the whole scripture as the infallible word of God'.<sup>50</sup> For Scott the canon of scripture was one undeniable proof of the Christian religion,<sup>51</sup> while for Priestley only history could fill the role of a guide to the understanding of scripture.<sup>52</sup>

Priestley's lack of belief in the doctrine of plenary inspiration came along with his opposition to most of the major tenets of orthodox Christianity. Of the entire Christian belief system only revelation, the resurrection of the dead and a

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph Priestley, *An History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ*, 4 vols (Birmingham, 1786), vol. 4, p. 15.

<sup>49</sup>See Dennis G. Wigmore-Beddoes, *Yesterday's Radicals: A Study of the Affinity between Unitarianism and Broad Church Anglicanism in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 35. Wigmore-Beddoes quotes John Kenrick from an article published in 1850, when Kenrick wrote 'we must deal with the evangelists as human biographers ... possessing no supernatural source of knowledge...and exposed to the influences of their age [and] their country'. See John Kenrick 'The Relation of the Third to the First Two Gospels', *PR*, vol. 6, 1850, pp. 61-62. Wigmore - Beddoes comments on the originality of Kenrick's view and regards it as advanced for his time. Joseph Priestley, however, wrote virtually the same thing sixty four years earlier. There are many similar passages from Priestley in *Early Opinions* alone. He wrote, for example, that 'Setting aside all notions of *inspiration*, we should judge of the gospel history as we do of any other'. Quoted in *Early Opinions*, vol. 4, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Scott, *A Vindication of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and of the Doctrines Contained in them; Being an Answer to the Two Parts of Mr. Paine's Age of Reason* (London, 1796), p. 129. Scott believed that, 'These writings contain also internal proof both of being genuine and divine; and are confirmed to us by prophecies, which have been fulfilling ever since. Whatever man may now say of the sacred writers, they always speak of themselves and each other, as declaring the truth of God to mankind, and they demand credit and obedience as the messengers and ambassadors of Christ'.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>52</sup> See note 50 above.

retributive after-life for man remained. In addition to that, the fact that he had related his Socinian beliefs to aspects of eighteenth-century natural philosophy and had emphasised his idea that the truth about the man Christ's simple message was to be found exclusively in a concrete, historical approach to the interpretation of scripture had important implications for the parameters of his thought. It meant that the form of reasoning he employed in his assessment of the scriptures historically was one which functioned in a very narrow sense.<sup>53</sup> This was ultimately due to the fact that his uncompromisingly rational approach to the interpretation of the Bible had its roots in empiricism, natural philosophy, and in the mechanisms of human psychology.<sup>54</sup>

With regard to history there were three different perspectives in Priestley's thought. Firstly there was his treatment of secular history, secondly the way in which he dealt with the 'corruptions' of later ages in his biblical criticism, and thirdly, his efforts to link faith to context in his examination of the events of early Christianity. His method in secular history, which was clearly outlined in his work *Lectures on History and General Policy*,<sup>55</sup> was very different from aspects of his use of history in theological terms. A syllabus of these *Lectures*, which he gave at

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<sup>53</sup> The results of this and its implications with regard to aspects of the thought of the historian John Kenrick are examined in chapter seven, below.

<sup>54</sup> See Gerard Reedy, *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth Century England* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 35 – 36. In his study on the Anglican divines of the late seventeenth century, Reedy argues that in their attempts to establish rational grounds for Christianity they used two forms of reason. One was reason in a narrow sense, which compared theological truth with the necessary laws of the mind. For them, reason in a wider sense was disposed to an acceptance of the full contents of scripture.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on History and General Policy, to which is Prefixed, An Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life*, 2 vols (London, 1793). A syllabus of these lectures, which he gave at Warrington Academy, was compiled in 1765, but it was not until more than twenty years later, in 1788, that they were finally published in the two volumes. They contain a wealth of practical historical wisdom and represent a valuable guide to the student of history. Of great interest is Priestley's evaluation of historical sources and evidence. For discussion on these lectures, see Thomas Peardon, *Transition in English Historical Writing, 1760-1830* (New York, 1933) and also Robert E. Schofield, *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 2004), pp. 253-257.

Warrington Academy, was compiled in 1765, but it was not until more than twenty years later, in 1788, that they were finally published in two volumes. There is no doubt that Priestley was a historian of great vision, and one with a highly developed understanding of the complex nature of his craft in relation to the secular world. In particular, his consideration of diverse historical sources, such as oral tradition, letters, coins and medals, monuments and historical poems, and his differentiation between direct and indirect evidence, are all highly accomplished.<sup>56</sup>

His perspectives on the wider sweep of history were notable also. With formidable insight Priestley wrote that in any period of history 'so extensive is the connexion of things' that everything written or accomplished is 'necessarily related, in a thousand ways, to many other things that were transacted at the same time'.<sup>57</sup> Indeed in order that a proper judgement could be made as to whether circumstances may repeat themselves and could therefore perhaps be amended, the experience of different ages should be compared and distant events brought together so that all schemes, transactions and characters should be seen 'in one unbroken view, with all their connexions and relations'.<sup>58</sup> Reflected here, of course, in this all-encompassing view of history, was his great necessitarian vision of existence.

There are several characteristics of his thought evident in his approach to secular history which confirm him as a historian of the Enlightenment. The first was his tendency, like many writers of his time, to see history as teaching by

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<sup>56</sup> Priestley, *History and General Policy*, vol. 1, Part Two, Lectures iv, v, & vi.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, Part One, Lecture vi, p. 146.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, Part One, Lecture i, p. 52.



example, and 'the examples which history presents to us are generally *complete*'.

<sup>59</sup> History, he wrote, handed down the capacity for good judgement and the more complete our knowledge of it the happier we were. <sup>60</sup> The second aspect was specifically related to Priestley and his description of the interconnections not only within a historical context but also in the wider historical picture. His emphasis on such closely bound relationships, consistent with his ideas about the linkages of cause and effect in his doctrine of necessity, showed clearly that the mechanistic element in his thought was present in his conceptual understanding of historical patterns.

A third characteristic of his thought which connected his secular history to the Enlightenment was his enthusiasm for universal principles, those rules of life and conduct which were in accordance with the 'invariable nature of things'. <sup>61</sup> By understanding this, continued Priestley in his quotations from Bolingbroke, the historian would soon form a general system of ethics and politics by the trial of these principles and rules 'in all ages', and on the confirmation of them 'by universal experience'. <sup>62</sup> Priestley wrote of moral sentiments that, although one would expect them to be invariable and constant, they were perverted and intermixed with notions that were foreign 'and even contrary to morality, in the minds of some whole nations'. <sup>63</sup> Human moral diversity in historical terms was, for Priestley, a temporary condition which would eventually be eradicated in

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, Part One, Lecture i, p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, Part One, Lecture i, p. 52. Priestley also wrote that history could 'free the mind from many foolish prejudices' by giving 'a just idea of the advantages and disadvantages of mankind in all ages'. See *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, Part One, Lecture I, p. 48. Here Priestley is quoting Bolingbroke.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Priestley, *History and General Policy*, vol. 1, p. 76.

God's plan which was 'seeing that all evils lead to, and terminate in, a greater good'.<sup>64</sup> Clearly for him the variety of human ethical standards in history should not be seen as the product of historical circumstances and therefore understandable within the cultural framework of a particular age, but should be considered rather as a divergence from the ultimate perfection of the universal moral code.

Fixated with the idea of universal norms and general principles as he was, he nevertheless appeared to be acutely aware of the historical importance of the variations in language, laws and customs of different ages and diverse cultures.<sup>65</sup> Writing, for example, on the relationship between aspects of the society and laws of ancient Rome, he cited the example of the Roman law which prohibited children from being disinherited without just cause. We may infer from this, wrote Priestley, that the state of paternal and filial affection among the Romans must have been unfavourable. However, accounts such as these in his secular historical thought were merely still frames of the past, for in his understanding of historical context there was no real sense of movement or change. It did not contain any feeling of the fluidity of organic development which dominated the thought of historians of the Romantic Age. For Priestley, the past was polemical and anti-historical.<sup>66</sup> Thus in his perspectives on secular history it would seem that Priestley was essentially a historian of the Enlightenment. His thoughts were concentrated upon a mechanistic concept of the contexts of the past which

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., vol 1, Part Two, Lecture viii, pp. 150-154 and vol. 1, Part Two, Lecture ix, pp. 155-159.

<sup>66</sup> See James J. Hoecker, 'Joseph Priestley as a Historian and the Idea of Progress', *PPN*, vol. 3, 1979, pp. 29-40.

remained static in time and which provided lessons for the future, and on universal laws which were valuable in the same respect.

Importantly, however, there was a difference in the method he employed to support aspects of his theology, for here there was evidence of a keen historical understanding of the development of doctrine in relation to circumstances over time. The key text in his analysis was his *Corruptions of Christianity*. When the two volumes first appeared in 1782 they caused great controversy and initiated Priestley's famous long running dispute with Samuel Horsley (1733-1806), the Cambridge educated Anglican prelate who became Bishop of St. David's in 1788. The exchange of views lasted for six years, from 1783 to 1789 and cast Priestley's ideas into sharp focus.

His objective in *Corruptions* had been to show how, what had been originally a simple, sound doctrine of Christian faith, had been corrupted by the theological and cultural mores of subsequent ages, the Greek metaphysicians having been the greatest culprits. In this work, and in another published four years later in 1786, and entitled *An History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ*, he tried to reveal the pristine, untainted origins of the Christian faith and to prove that the early Christians believed in the unity of God and the simple humanity of Christ, and consequently were fundamentally Unitarian.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols (London, 1881), vol. 1, pp. 429-441. Stephen's critique of Priestley's work in general is scathing, to say the least. He accused him of a lack of originality, poor judgement, careless scholarship and a shallowness of thought which results in him 'rapidly glancing at the surface of opinion...[and he] flashes out at times some quick and instructive estimate of one side of a disputed argument, only to relapse at the next moment into crude dogmas and obsolete superstitions'. Quoted at p. 431.

In his treatment of these theological concerns Priestley exposed a more innovative side to his historical consciousness. In order to disentangle the simple truth from the corruptions which had accrued over the centuries, he had to identify those elements and circumstances within each age which had been responsible for the creation of false doctrine. Priestley's work established by what means a primitive form of Christianity had been obscured by the irrational dogma and theological systems which had been generated by time-bound ideas. The sources of these false doctrines had to be identified and the way in which they had been formed clearly explained in order that there would be adequate justification for considering them flawed.

This process took the form of a dismantling of that which had resulted from the historical development of doctrines which to the radical scholar appeared irrational. Although his motivation resulted in the paring away of doctrinal accretions, Priestley's process inevitably involved an appreciation and understanding of the relationship between such theological systems and the process over time which caused them to take shape. Consequently he was responsible for the evolution of a very sophisticated historical method<sup>68</sup> which appears to have been absent in his secular historical ideas.

One example of how he tackled this may be found in his treatment of the development of the doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>69</sup> The simple direction of Christ to his disciples at the Lord's Supper to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him was corrupted over the centuries by custom, superstition,

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<sup>68</sup> Margaret Canovan, 'The Irony of History: Priestley's Rational Theology', *PPN*, no. 4, 1980, pp. 16-25.

<sup>69</sup> Priestley, *Corruptions*, pp.140-164.

priestly arrogance and papal whim into a doctrine of supreme irrationality.<sup>70</sup> It first became a sacrament, then a mystery, until Justin Martyr's idea that the bread and wine were the true flesh and blood of Christ became accepted. Gradually enveloped in more ritual and symbolism, this view was endorsed by the Second Council of Nicaea in the fourth century and became an article of faith at the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

Due to the fact that the corruption of the original idea of the Lord's Supper took place in the earliest times, Priestley pointed out that its rectification had never been complete. Even the reformers were overawed by the mysteries of the Eucharist, although by his own time some Dissenting congregations had no objection to their ministers preaching all their lives without conducting this particular ceremony.<sup>71</sup> Priestley's consciousness of the circumstances which effected the change in the nature of a doctrine such as this over time gave his theological concerns about the 'corruptions' of Christianity a truly historical perspective. Indeed ninety years later that most perceptive of commentators, the Unitarian biographer Alexander Gordon, credited Priestley with being a precursor of much later theories of theological development.<sup>72</sup> Gordon went so far as to suggest that Priestley's greatest gift to theology was the application of the historical method to problems of doctrine. He believed also that Priestley was the genuine precursor of the historical treatment of biblical and theological questions.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 161. Priestley cites the comments of Averroes, 'the great freethinker of his age, [who] said that Judaism was the religion of children and Mahometanism that of hogs; but he knew no sect so foolish and absurd as that of the Christians, who adored what they ate'.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 163.

<sup>72</sup> Alexander Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History* (London, 1895), p. 120.

<sup>73</sup> Consequently, in trying to prove what was false doctrine Priestley employed a truly innovative historical method.

His perspectives in historical biblical criticism were altered, however, when it came to a search for the very origin, or 'springhead', of Christian faith.

Alexander Gordon noted correctly also that Priestley's historical method threw into sharp relief the idea that there was some 'primitive nucleus whence developments proceed'.<sup>74</sup> In attempting, however, to validate what he believed to be true rather than false, the emphasis of Priestley's historical approach changed. It became less concerned with the development of doctrine than with how close the historian could come to the very beginnings of Christianity, to those truths which were related to the events of the life of Christ. His efforts to prove that primitive Christians believed in the simple humanity of Christ were derived from the evidence of the opinions of those closest to the events of the time.

For example, if the Ebionites, the Jewish Christians who believed that Christ was a mere man and who flourished immediately after the age of the apostles, had been instructed by those apostles in the doctrine of the divinity or the pre-existence of Christ, would they not have abandoned their new faith?<sup>75</sup> The Unitarian idea of the nature of Christ, Priestley believed, was probably universal amongst the common people in the apostolic age and those who first discussed the idea of Christ's divinity were aware of just how unpopular their

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 120, 122.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph Priestley, *An History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ, Compiled from Original Writers, Proving that the Christian Church was at first Unitarian*, 4 vols. (Birmingham, 1786), pp. 305-306.

opinions were.<sup>76</sup> As to the doctrine of the immaculate conception, apart from the allusion to it at the beginnings of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, there is no mention of it in the rest of the New Testament. Had the history contained in the introductions to these two gospels been true, surely Jesus would have been publicly announced as the Messiah from his birth? And had it been true, why was it not recorded by John and Mark also?<sup>77</sup>

Thus Priestley used history to verify the truth of the origins of Christianity, staunchly defending his opinion that 'all that Christianity rests upon is the reality of certain historical events'.<sup>78</sup> The writers of scripture, like other men, were fallible, and he wrote that we should consider them only as 'in the character of *historians*, and *witnesses* of what they heard and saw'.<sup>79</sup> Matthew and Luke, for example, were simply *historians*, 'whose credibility must be determined by the circumstances in which they wrote, and the nature of the facts which they relate'.

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Priestley's conclusions on his historical investigation of early Christianity were linked to a set of historical maxims which set out the rules for the credibility of evidence.<sup>81</sup> The form of reasoning behind them he compared to the rigorous

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 316-318.

<sup>78</sup> Priestley, *Philosophical Unbeliever*, Part 2, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>80</sup> Priestley, *Early Opinions*, vol. 4, p. 58.

<sup>81</sup> See Ibid., pp. 294-302. For example, Priestley wrote that 'When two persons give different accounts of things, that evidence is to be preferred, which is either in itself more probable, or more agreeable to other credible testimony', *ibid.*, p. 296. He also was clear that, 'When any particular doctrine is a necessary part of a system, and it can be made to appear that within a given period that doctrine was not known, it may be concluded that the system had no existence within that period. Or when any doctrine inconsistent with the system is held in that period, it equally proves the same thing'. Quoted at p. 299. His view on the retention of belief in general was that 'The common or unlearned people, in any country, who do not speculate much, retain longest any opinions with which their minds have been much impressed; and therefore, we always look for the oldest opinions in any country, or any class of men, among the common people, and not among the learned'. Quoted at p. 300.

and exacting *first principles* or *axioms* of the mathematician, the truth of which could never be disputed.<sup>82</sup> He wrote that he wished to apply to the discussions in *Early Opinions* a form of reasoning which was 'equally strict', and had drawn up his '*maxims of historical criticism*', with this in mind so that their rational worth would be incontestable.<sup>83</sup> Thus in *Early Opinions* the Priestley of the radical Enlightenment resurfaced with a historical method founded upon the ultra-rational criteria of mathematical reason and the narrow boundaries it implied. The approach he took in *Early Opinions* to prove the truth of his rational religion is more akin to that in his secular history and consequently this work is at odds with *Corruptions* in that it lacks the fluidity, movement and change which are all consistent with the developmental style of the latter work.

This contradiction may be explained also by the fact that Priestley's objective in *Early Opinions* was to prove the truth about the primitive, original form of Christianity, and confirm that it was Unitarian, for this simple, Christian truth, free from 'corruptions', was, for him, universal and applicable in exactly the same form to all ages. Despite the fact that the evidence to support his arguments had been derived from the time and cultural circumstances surrounding the life of Jesus and his followers, the treatment of the actual truth to be found in the context by Priestley is a-historical. He sought the origins of a theological maxim which, by its very nature was not susceptible to the forces of development or change. Priestley's simple faith, the objective of his rational, historical investigations, remained frozen in time and was, accordingly, eternally

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 294-295.



and immutably universal. Consequently, there existed here the distinct paradox of the use of a historical method to validate an a-historical belief which transcended the ages.

Thus Priestley's perspectives on secular history and on historical biblical criticism were wreathed in complexity, revealing several different angles of engagement. His supreme objective in historical criticism was to 'test Christianity by reason'.<sup>84</sup> However, the mechanistic and mathematical ideas he linked to his method not only narrowed and restricted the parameters of his rational approach but also made it fundamentally a-historical. Even in his search for the truth about the pure 'primitive nucleus'<sup>85</sup> of Christianity he was unwilling to give up on the laws of mathematics and natural philosophy. His method indicated that for Priestley history was governed by these very laws rather than the unpredictable outcomes of human activity and experience.

Equally unhistorical was his objective, both in his secular and biblical histories, to validate universal truths. In contrast to this, however, was the essentially historical thrust of *Corruptions*, which was concerned with the historical contexts which had produced false doctrines. These contradictory perspectives generated a tension in his historical thought between the universal and those particular contexts which were important to his identification and removal of the historically generated doctrines which had, in his view, tainted the

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<sup>84</sup> Gordon, *English Unitarian History*, p. 108. Gordon wrote of Priestley that 'His attitude towards the religion of Jesus Christ was void of any trace of ambiguity. With him it was a primary conviction that to test Christianity by reason could only free it from alloy; its purity regained, its supremacy was assured.'

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Christian faith.<sup>86</sup> However, despite the varied nature of his historical concerns, there was in Priestley, as in other eighteenth century radical theologians, incontrovertible evidence of a drift away from systematic doctrine in favour of a historical understanding of the untainted, original truth of the scriptures.

The appreciation of the complexities of Priestley's historical and theological ideas is important because his influence over the succeeding generation of Unitarian critics was profound. In a biographical tribute to Priestley's memory delivered some weeks after his death on 6 February 1804, Joshua Toulmin (1740-1815)<sup>87</sup> told his audience that 'scarcely any author has attracted such an universal notice'.<sup>88</sup> He added that when the Abbé Raynal<sup>89</sup> was in England he had conveyed to a friend the reverence with which Priestley was regarded by European philosophers. Toulmin went on to say that Priestley's ardent mind had zealously detected and removed those corruptions which 'obscured the lustre of the everlasting gospel'.<sup>90</sup> Writing of Priestley's achievements in a letter to his congregation at the New Meeting in Birmingham, the minister and biblical critic John Kentish (1768-1853), who was first teacher

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<sup>86</sup> Such concerns on Priestley's part, to remove those 'corruptions' which distorted Christianity, were not entirely new. Erasmus had taught that Christianity had to be recovered as a simple faith. Consequently, from the sixteenth century onwards among radical thinkers, and later, in the eighteenth century amongst Dissenters, there had been a powerful motivation to restore a primitive, simple and tolerant form of the Christian religion. See Letis, 'From Sacred Text to Religious Text', p. 281.

<sup>87</sup> Joshua Toulmin was co-founder, with Robert Aspland (1782-1845), of the Southern Unitarian Society, which came into being in 1801.

<sup>88</sup> Joshua Toulmin, *A Biographical Tribute to the Memory of the Rev. Joseph Priestley* (Birmingham, 1804), p.11.

<sup>89</sup> The Jesuit-educated Guillaume-Thomas abbé de Raynal (1713-1796) was a radical French writer and propagandist whose work helped to create the intellectual climate of the French Revolution. His most important work was a six-volume history of the European colonies in India and America which was both anti-royalist and anti-clerical in tone and content.

<sup>90</sup> Toulmin, *Biographical Tribute*, p. 20.

and then friend for many years to John Kenrick,<sup>91</sup> commented that Priestley had ‘one of those great and commanding minds...that [-] appear but rarely in the course of years’.<sup>92</sup>

Priestley’s innovative contribution to this area of scholarship may have been ignored to a great extent by modern historians of ideas, but as regards some of his contemporaries and immediate successors in Rational Dissent this was not the case. John Simpson of Bath (1745-1813), also a Socinian and a ‘worshipper of the One God and Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, his holy and beloved servant’,<sup>93</sup> studied under Priestley at Warrington Academy from 1760. At that time, Priestley was responsible for the teaching of classics, logic, the theory of language and universal grammar, and also history. The last subject on this list was a new addition to the curriculum, for before he lectured at Warrington the study of history had been virtually ignored at all the Dissenting academies.<sup>94</sup>

It may well have been Priestley’s enthusiasm for history as a weapon against the ‘corruptions’ of his faith that inspired the young Simpson to advocate the benefits of a historical reading of the scriptures. Simpson’s volume, *An Essay to Show that Christianity is Best Conveyed in the Historic Form*<sup>95</sup> emphasised two important points : firstly that the scriptures could be more easily understood if they were studied in the historical form : and secondly that the historical style of

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<sup>91</sup> See below.

<sup>92</sup> John Kentish, ‘ Letter from the Rev. John Kentish, To the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, assembling at the New Meeting, in Birmingham’, appended to Toulmin, *Biographical Tribute*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>93</sup> Anon, ‘Brief Memoir of the late Rev. John Simpson’, in *MR*, vol. 9. February, 1814, p. 86. There was a story told for many years amongst Unitarians that when Joseph Priestley was on his deathbed he found the strength to praise John Simpson’s works.

<sup>94</sup> H. McLachlan, *English Education Under the Test Acts, Being the History of the Nonconformist Academies, 1662-1820* (Manchester, 1931), p. 212.

<sup>95</sup> John Simpson, *An Essay to Show that Christianity is Best Conveyed in the Historic Form* (Leeds, 1782).

presentation will tend to maintain and support religious truth against the 'corruptions' which threaten it. Simpson's exposition was not in any sense a treatise on historical perspective. His objective was to emphasise the historical *reading* of scripture as a source of understanding rather than the critical approach which concentrated on the form of historical truth itself.

However, the manner in which he presented his argument contained some vivid contrasts between the abstract, the systematic and the metaphysical on the one hand and the historical on the other. He wrote, for example, that ideas of the true nature of a practical religion such as that shown in the New Testament cannot be communicated in a better way than by memoirs of the perfect life of Jesus. This is the best way of displaying Christianity, rather than as 'an abstract, metaphysical system'.<sup>96</sup> He went on to note that although the historical method may at first appear to convey the doctrines and duties of religion in a scattered and diffuse manner, many circumstances of time, place or person may illustrate valuable truths. The importance of this comment was that it linked the understanding of the simple, true and uncorrupted Christian doctrine to the historical context.

We should recognise also, wrote Simpson, that it was the historic style which is best suited to *prevent* a corruption of the true religion, for 'a designed interpolation, in a narrative, is more easily discovered than in a system'. Furthermore, when doctrines are delivered in an 'abstract, systematical way', and precepts are given without any application of them to particular circumstances,

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-57.

'they lose their chief force and spirit'.<sup>97</sup> When, however, religious principles are interwoven in a genuine [historical] account, 'We are led to admire and delight in the narrative'.<sup>98</sup> Thus although Simpson's ideas are at first glance more superficial than those historical-biblical critiques of some of his colleagues in the period, they nevertheless revealed clearly that frame of mind which rejected the abstractions of theological systems in favour of a historical illustration which bonded together 'the most important doctrines and precepts, with many circumstances of time, place, person, customs and manners, religion and government'.<sup>99</sup>

Simpson's teaching methods were closely linked to the radical view in favour of a historical understanding of the scriptures because they encouraged students to judge the truth of the gospel writings on their own terms and without external interference from pre-supposed abstract doctrines. The wrong method was employed when 'systematic notions became the standard according to which scripture is interpreted'.<sup>100</sup> The correct way was to 'banish metaphysical subtlety and abstruse speculation for the pure, simple, practical truth which Jesus preached'.<sup>101</sup>

This persistent theme was not one which was strictly limited to a small group of scholars. It was a cast of mind which spread widely into the teaching of divinity at some Dissenting academies. According to John Kenrick, Simpson was

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 80, 82, 83 & 103.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-39.

<sup>100</sup> John Simpson, *An Essay on the Impropriety of the Usual Method of Teaching Christian Theology* (London, 1803), p. 9.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

an influence on Charles Wellbeloved (1769-1858), the Unitarian who was principal and teacher of divinity at Manchester College, York, from 1803 until 1840. <sup>102</sup> Kenrick wrote that it was Simpson's tract on teaching <sup>103</sup> which was partly responsible for persuading Wellbeloved to found his own method of instruction in scriptural interpretation on the basis of independent criticism and philology, rather than on a more structured discussion about specific dogmas and doctrines. <sup>104</sup>

The Unitarian divine Thomas Belsham (1750-1829), an ardent follower of Joseph Priestley had become John Kenrick's step-uncle in 1794 when Belsham's sister Elizabeth married Kenrick's father Timothy Kenrick whose first wife, Mary had died a year earlier. Belsham was a biblical critic who accepted the historical idea and whose great concern was the modification of the doctrine of divine inspiration to make way for a rational interpretation of scripture. Belsham's tortured journey from orthodoxy to Socinianism is described in an account by John Williams of Belsham's life. <sup>105</sup> According to a diary entry dated 1 February 1789, Belsham, after much soul searching, reading of scripture, and study of the

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<sup>102</sup> John Kenrick, *A Biographical Memoir of the Late Rev. Charles Wellbeloved* (London, 1860), p. 101.

<sup>103</sup> See note 102, above.

<sup>104</sup> Kenrick, *Biographical Memoir of Wellbeloved*, pp. 100-101. See also note on p. 101. Kenrick described Simpson's tract on teaching as a 'very valuable pamphlet' in which the author points out the problems of the dogmatic method which 'makes the theological system the interpreter of Scripture, instead of allowing Scripture to be the test of the idea of Christianity', and recommends the historical method as the only proper one.

<sup>105</sup> John Williams, *Memoirs of the Late Reverend Thomas Belsham* (London, 1833). This is a long, rambling, disconnected account of the life of Belsham, constructed mainly upon long quotations from letters and diaries. There are 791 pages in the book, which was published without chapters, an index or even a table of contents. Despite its lack of arrangement or structure, however, it nevertheless manages to convey to the reader the emotional trauma of Belsham's gradual conversion to a radical Unitarian theology. Alexander Gordon wrote of the biography that 'Its value lies...in that it permits a very close approach to the inner life of a man of deep religious experience. The redeeming element of the book is to be found in the passages from Belsham's private diary...Here are his prayers, his sighs, his doubts, his hopes, his despondences, his frank addresses to God in sunshine and in gloom'. See Gordon, *Addresses*, pp. 308-309.

work of David Hartley, had finally become a 'Unitarian', and a week later, in a prayer, he told that he had discovered 'the falsehood of those monstrous, absurd and idolatrous doctrines by which the beauty of Christianity has been defaced', and vowed to contribute to the 'purification of the gospel'.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, in an address on his reasons for leaving his teaching post at the Dissenting Academy at Daventry, which had an Arian tradition, he confirmed that, having been a zealous advocate for the idea of pre-existence, he was now 'a confirmed believer in the proper humanity, of Jesus Christ'.<sup>107</sup> It followed from this that he hoped to endeavour to 'extricate the pure doctrine of Christ from that mass of error with which it is so generally blended'.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, like Priestley, Belsham's objective as a Socinian who believed in the simple humanity of Christ, was to identify and remove the false doctrines which undermined the simple truth of the gospels.

Over the following decades Belsham wrote a great deal on scriptural interpretation, often in the columns of the Unitarian journal, *The Monthly Repository*.<sup>109</sup> In 1819 he encouraged scholars to interpret the sacred writings in the same way as other ancient works, by the use of a correct text and the philological approach and to pay attention to the

context, to the object and design of the writer,

to the habits of thinking, and the peculiar phraseology

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<sup>106</sup> Williams, *Thomas Belsham*, pp. 376, 379.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 510.

<sup>109</sup> See *MR*, First Series, 1806-1826.

of his age and country'.<sup>110</sup>

This guidance to scholars of scripture emphasised the importance of both the historical and the philological approach to be taken in the understanding of scripture.

In the preliminary dissertation to his long-awaited work, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle, Translated with an Exposition and Notes*, finally published in 1822, he expanded upon his ideas on the subject within the general theme that inspiration related only to the basic tenets of Christianity, leaving the apostle himself free to present them in his own way. Belsham wrote that the 'vulgar and loose idea' which regards every sentence of scripture as an inspired aphorism must be abandoned by every one who 'allows himself to reason justly upon the subject'.<sup>111</sup> He guided the reader to the work of the German scholar Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791), who had decided that it was possible to 'doubt and even deny the inspiration of the New Testament' and yet be persuaded of the truth of Christianity.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Thomas Belsham, quoted in Francis Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944), p. 132. See *MR*, vol. xiv, 1819, p. 403. Although this quotation comes from an anonymous refutation of objections to a Unitarian 'Improved Version' of the New Testament, Mineka is quite certain that the author was Thomas Belsham.

<sup>111</sup> Thomas Belsham, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle, Translated, with an Exposition and Notes* (London, 1822), p. xxv, note 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* See also John David Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London, 1802), vol. 1, p. 72. Michaelis wrote that, 'The question, whether the books of the New Testament are inspired, is not so important, as the question whether they are genuine'. Quoted at *ibid.* This work, which also contained a dissertation on the origins and composition of the first three gospels, had been translated by Herbert Marsh. It was a purely critical and historical work in which the author's intention was to explain the Greek New Testament with the 'same impartiality, and the same unbiased love of truth with which a critic in profane literature would examine the writings of a Homer or a Virgil'. This quotation comes from Marsh's translator's preface, pp. ii-iii. From even this short passage it is not hard to see why Unitarian scholars such as Belsham were attracted to the German's perspective on the New Testament. – For an examination of the connections between Unitarians and German scholarship, see chapter 4, below.



Belsham contended that there was no reason to believe that Paul was inspired to write anything specific with regard to his epistles. The apostle put in 'no claim to inspiration in his reasonings', <sup>113</sup> and neither did he in any other aspect of his writings. At all times he wrote as any other person of similar abilities would in the same circumstances, and consequently his writings should be examined in the same way as any other author, 'with the same freedom and the same candour'.<sup>114</sup> This meant that the critic was released from the 'bondage' in which it is held that every epistle, every sentence and indeed every word was dictated by the Holy Spirit. <sup>115</sup>

If this had been the case the critic would have been compelled to justify each doctrine, whereas upon a 'rational and judicious theory of inspiration' he has scope for liberal and candid criticism'. <sup>116</sup> Thus a rational view of inspiration means that the critic does not feel bound to 'warp and strain a text from its plain and obvious meaning' and feel he must 'adopt some...farfetched interpretation in order to reconcile it to truth'. <sup>117</sup> Thus for Belsham the idea of plenary inspiration is a serious drawback to a truthful interpretation of Paul's epistles.

Instead, the critic's approach should be to examine Paul's writings with regard to his style and phraseology, to the fact that he was a Jew and a Pharisee, whose education gave a certain cast to his language. The reader should take account also of allusions to customs and manners not now in existence and to facts and events which could not be known to the modern

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. xxvii.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp. xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. xxviii.

scholar. What was certain, however, was the fact that the Epistles were genuine and that their credibility had always been regarded as given,<sup>118</sup> and the critic, therefore, could be confident that they were written by Paul, who was a true believer in Christian revelation.

Equally important was the absolute certainty that they had never been intended to burden the 'simple doctrine of Christ' with 'curious speculations' such as predestination and original sin.<sup>119</sup> Instead, they were instrumental in providing a historical perspective upon not only Paul's zeal, courage and patience but also the dispositions, characters, and views, the feelings, the prejudices, the imperfect information, the partial reformation, the errors, the faults and irregularities, the frequent wavering and instability, of the first professors of the Christian faith.<sup>120</sup>

In other words, Paul's Epistles provided a perfect historical picture of the experiences of those who were the very first to deal with that pristine kernel of truth which was the origin of the uncorrupted Christian doctrine. From all this it is clear that Belsham's frame of mind with regard to inspiration, historical criticism and to the removal of 'corruptions' to reveal the origins of the pure and primitive Christianity was very similar indeed to those ideas expressed by Joseph Priestley.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. xxxvii and note 3. Here Belsham cites Nathaniel Lardner's work, *Credibility of the Gospel History*, as an 'incomparable' source of external evidence for the genuineness of the Epistles. Belsham noted that, 'This learned and candid writer has completely exhausted the subject, and has brought together a mass of evidence in favour of the Sacred Writings, which will in vain be sought after to establish the genuineness of any profane author.'

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. xxxix.

At Daventry Academy in the 1780's Belsham taught John Kenrick's father Timothy Kenrick (1759-1804) and also the scholar and biblical critic John Kentish (1768-1853), who in turn tutored the younger Kenrick for the two years before he enrolled as a student at Glasgow University in 1807. Consequently Belsham, who was influenced in virtually every aspect of both his theological and philosophical ideas by Joseph Priestley, was himself in a position of great influence over the next two generations of Socinian scholars, including John Kenrick himself.

Timothy Kenrick's Socinianism was deeply – felt, for in 1792 he drew up new rules for the Western Unitarian Society which would effectively exclude Arians. According to John Kentish, it was Kenrick's examination of the scriptures which had finally convinced him that Jesus was neither equal with God nor a pre-existent being but 'simply of the human race'.<sup>121</sup> In the summer of 1799 Kenrick and Joseph Bretland (1742 – 1819), also a Socinian, opened their Dissenting academy in Exeter, which was attended by the young John. Bretland's religious opinions were described on the occasion of his death as being 'strictly Unitarian...the result of candid, free and deliberate inquiry'.<sup>122</sup> The latter part of this quotation is in fact an accurate description of the teaching methods employed by both Bretland and Timothy Kenrick at the new academy. These techniques did not involve debate or criticism of a particular doctrine or dogma, but instead encouraged students to arrive freely at their own opinions by the study of scripture alone. Kenrick believed that when

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<sup>121</sup> John Kentish, 'Memoir', in Timothy Kenrick, *An Exposition of the Historical Writings of the New Testament*, 3 vols (Birmingham, 1807), p. viii.

<sup>122</sup> Anon, Obituary of Joseph Bretland, *MR*, vol. 14, July 1819, p. 445.

divinity was taught from 'human systems' the mind of the student was concerned more with theories than a rational approach to a true understanding of the scriptures.<sup>123</sup> Consequently, in order to tackle a fresh analysis and to form a properly balanced opinion of such meaning the student had to abandon any presuppositions he might hold about doctrines.

Also, in order to understand the full truth about Christ's discourses, it was necessary to take some account of the historical context in which the scriptures were written and 'to consider the circumstances and present temper of his hearers'.<sup>124</sup> He cited as one example the event of Christ's teachings on the Mount of Olives to a gathering of people whose expectations were for a worldly Messiah who would deliver them from the Roman yoke. This explained, wrote Timothy Kenrick, the form of the beatitudes, which were expressed as short, almost paradoxical statements which were simultaneously highly complex, but also sublimely simple, to enlighten the crowd in an unforgettable way about the true nature of the kingdom of God. Timothy Kenrick had linked, therefore, the form of Christ's Sermon on the Mount and the doctrines it produced to a historical situation in which the common people had certain expectations about the nature of their Messiah, expectations which had to be dispelled.

His interpretation indicated that he had an appreciation of the relationship between Jesus' presentation of the simple Christian doctrine and the historical circumstances of the time. Timothy Kenrick's work tried to clarify aspects of the gospel stories, in this case the doctrine of God's kingdom on earth, by putting

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<sup>123</sup> Timothy Kenrick, *Historical Writings*, p. 37.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 35.

them in their historical context. The structure of the contents of the three volumes took the form of a careful analysis of scripture, verse by verse, and an account of the contextual backgrounds to the gospel passages.

The approach to the scriptures of John Kentish, whose Socinianism was confirmed by John Kenrick in his memoir of his lifelong friend,<sup>125</sup> was rather similar. Kentish selected short passages of scripture and discussed their meaning from historical and philological viewpoints. Ever present here also, as in the work of other radical scholars, was the theme of the rejection of false doctrine in favour of a rational, historical analysis of biblical topics. For example, Kentish believed that the idea that the washing of the disciples' feet was somehow symbolic of the purging of the souls of mankind was typical of attempts by orthodox scholars to bend and twist the meaning of an incident into what they wished it to represent with regard to a specific doctrine. Kentish argued that to consider that by this simple act Jesus was consciously intending to reach 'enigmatically and mystically' the doctrine of the atonement was a 'glaring abuse of the scriptures rather than a sober interpretation of them'.<sup>126</sup> Jesus' washing of his followers' feet was simply a lesson in charity and humility, for at the time the Jewish habit was to convey information by 'natural, rather than artificial signs, by deeds rather than words'.<sup>127</sup> It would be wrong, therefore, to approach the incident with the idea of the doctrine of the atonement as true as a basis for interpretation, then to consider this simple act as being symbolic of that doctrine. The critic must make his judgement from an entirely different perspective, that

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<sup>125</sup> John Kenrick, *Memoir of the Rev. John Kentish* (Birmingham, 1854), pp. 22-27.

<sup>126</sup> John Kentish, 'The Intention of Jesus in Washing the Feet of His Disciples, in *MR*, vol. 4, 1809, p. 442.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 440-441.

there was a historical explanation which clarifies for the reader the true reason for Christ's actions as no more than an act of humility which was performed in accordance with the cultural mores of the time.

Kentish's comments on the Sermon on the Mount concentrated on the style of expression adopted by Jesus. Kentish wrote that 'It abounds with imagery....[and] this characterises some of the beatitudes'.<sup>128</sup> This did not mean, however, that Christ's style was necessarily unusual or obscure, for the people of the East at this time were quite used to such a method of expressing themselves and accordingly 'this was our Saviour's accustomed – often his only – manner of instruction'.<sup>129</sup> There was, consequently, a clear link established here between Christ's manner of conveying his simple doctrine to the multitude and the form of linguistic imagery related to that particular time and place.

Like John Simpson, Kentish believed that it was the historical presentation of the Christian revelation which illuminated its truth and which made it compelling. Kentish wrote that had Christianity been handed down in any form rather than the historical, it would have been harder to discriminate between the simplicity of Jesus' doctrines and those 'human inventions by which they have been ... so grossly corrupted'.<sup>130</sup> He also believed that the historical narrative of the Christian doctrine made it impressive 'and thus the heart is interested and

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<sup>128</sup> John Kentish, *Notes and Comments on Passages of Scripture* (London, 1844), p. 161. Kentish wrote many articles over the first decades of the nineteenth century on the subject of biblical criticism. In 1844, nine years before his death, many of these were collected together and published in this volume. Two subsequent editions followed, one in 1846 and another in 1848.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> John Kentish, 'Thoughts on the Historical Form in Which Christianity is Conveyed', *CR*, vol. 16, November 1830, p. 480.

affected'.<sup>131</sup> It is of great importance to recognise, however, that because he viewed the contents of the gospel stories exclusively from a historical perspective, Kentish, like Simpson, saw that the gospels recorded not only the facts of the events of the life of Christ, but also the doctrines and precepts which were 'intermixed' with these facts. It was this primitive Christian narrative which presented its own truth about articles of faith and duty rather than any 'system' or 'artificial method'.<sup>132</sup>

Kentish wrote also that men were more impressed by doctrines thus united with historical facts 'than by those which are submitted to the understanding nakedly, and in the abstract'.<sup>133</sup> Thus his historical ideas had the effect of shifting Christ's own simple doctrines away from the abstract terms in which they were previously misunderstood and into the historical realm, effectively historicising the doctrines of the primitive Christian faith. Because Kentish and other radical critics emphasised the importance of the historical context in the understanding and formation of the text which indicated such doctrines, the pure Christianity they sought was in many respects time-bound and a contextual truth.

However, as we have seen, there was a contradiction in that the truth within the text of the scriptures was simultaneously historical due to its contextual linkages and a-historical in its universality. Furthermore, there was also an uneasy relationship between scripture itself and the context from which it emerged. With the advent of historical criticism, the meaning of the text was no

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 481.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 477. See note 100, above.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 482.

longer to be discovered in the text itself, but in its relationship with the context, which in a kind of 'circular fashion' then helps to explain the text itself. It is as though at this point in the evolution of historical criticism the scriptural text, which is no longer read as literal or figurative, but is to be understood historically, has somehow lost its foothold on the path to meaningful understanding. Although it may have been clear to the radical scholars of Unitarianism that they were seeking to reveal by historical means the truth about the early Christian faith, there was nevertheless here a conceptual problem, the resolution of which would be a complex process.<sup>134</sup>

What is clear, however, is that in the work of some radical biblical scholars of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth, there was a drift away from the presuppositions of doctrine towards a historical interpretation of scripture. This trend was intensified in the work of Joseph Priestley, whose objective was to identify and remove the doctrinal 'corruptions' which had obscured the truth of the primitive, simple faith of early Christianity. Some of these trends were apparent before Priestley appeared on the eighteenth century stage, and in his wake, when the interest among some radical scholars in historical interpretation gained momentum, they became even more evident.

The objective of the remainder of this chapter is to discuss some outlines of the thought of John Kenrick himself, to discover if he may be considered as within the same Socinian tradition, and to consider his role as a historical biblical critic. John Kenrick's religious beliefs remained fundamentally Socinian throughout his life, and it does not appear that his views in this respect altered

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<sup>134</sup> See chapter 4, below.



with time. James Martineau was correct to observe that there was no reason to suppose that Kenrick had ever deliberately adopted any other theory than that of the 'older' English Unitarianism, and indeed 'rested contentedly on its characteristic postulates and propositions'.<sup>135</sup>

Although Kenrick never discussed his religious views in any systematic way there were many passages in his work which revealed the nature of his faith. He published a number of sermons and many articles in the journals of the day which confirmed his beliefs. It should be remembered that, while a host of articles appeared over the years, from as early as 1807 until the mid 1860's, his separate works on biblical criticism were not compiled until he reached his retirement years in the period after 1850. These two small publications<sup>136</sup> did not contain anything which was in any sense new, but merely reflected the tenor of those core religious beliefs which had remained virtually unaltered throughout his life.

The first clue to the nature of Kenrick's faith comes from a letter he wrote as a student at Glasgow College in 1808 to his brother Samuel about a friend's examination experience. This student, according to Kenrick, was given questions on John's gospel, 'merely to see what faces we Socinians should make at them!'.<sup>137</sup> On the key question of the simple humanity of Christ, Kenrick discussed his views forcefully in a discourse delivered at Wolverhampton to the Warwickshire Unitarian Tract Society in 1818. He presented a series of arguments to prove that the title 'Son of God' was merely figurative and that

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<sup>135</sup> James Martineau, 'In Memoriam : John Kenrick', in *Essays, Reviews and Addresses* (London, 1890), pp. 415-416.

<sup>136</sup> John Kenrick, *The Value of the Holy Scriptures and the Right Mode of Using Them* (London, 1853) and *Biblical Essays* (London, 1864).

<sup>137</sup> John Kenrick to Samuel Kenrick, February, 180, UCL, Sharpe Papers, 198, fol. 4.

Christ was 'redeemer and teacher of mankind, and the revealer of immortal life'.

<sup>138</sup> He also pointed out that Nathaniel Lardner's *Letter on the Logos* had emphasised that there was nothing in the scriptural uses of the title or in the title itself to imply Christ's deity. Some nine years later, in 1827, he referred scathingly to the philosophic minds which had busied themselves with

subtle speculations respecting the nature of God  
and the person of Christ, which at last usurped the place  
of the primitive faith. <sup>139</sup>

This passage was contained in a sermon which presented Kenrick's thoughts on the reasons why it had been impossible to establish a popular base for Unitarian beliefs. He attacked the orthodox stranglehold on doctrine and emphasised forcefully that obstacles to the diffusion of Unitarianism had been generated by such factors as human self-interest, fear that a new radical belief might be construed as loss of faith, and also the power of national institutions to maintain the *status quo*. <sup>140</sup> There was, for example, the opinion, largely based upon misunderstanding of scripture, that salvation depended on certain doctrines and that the free exercise of reason on religious subjects was somehow 'dangerous'.

<sup>141</sup> In a general sense the sermon was a spirited defence of Unitarianism and an affirmation of the doctrines it presented.

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<sup>138</sup> John Kenrick, *The Scriptural Meaning of the Title Son of God, as Applied to Our Lord, A Discourse Delivered Before the Warwickshire Unitarian Tract Society at Wolverhampton, July 28, 1818* (London, 1835), quoted at p. 18. See also pp. 5-7.

<sup>139</sup> John Kenrick, *Obstacles to the Diffusion of Unitarianism and the Prospect of their Removal: A Sermon, Preached Before the Supporters of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association* (London, 1827), p. 33.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 21, 25.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

An equally powerful address, which had been dedicated to John Kentish, was given by Kenrick to the Socinians of the Western Unitarian Society at Lewin's Mead Meeting in Bristol in 1836. It outlined the arguments as to why Christ should be considered to have been no more than human and a divinely-inspired teacher and why his 'inspiration and his miracles are a sufficient foundation for faith in Christianity'.<sup>142</sup> This was the simplest way, he added, of understanding the relationship between Christ and the Father. It was also in accordance with Jewish expectations about the Messiah, and if we take account of Christ's own language regarding his power and of the nature of the apostolic preaching in the book of Acts, we were sometimes tempted to wonder 'how the portentous doctrine of a Trinity in Unity should ever have grown up'. The source of this 'great corruption' was the existence of 'criminal [and] disgraceful' feelings on the part of those who began it and carried it on.<sup>143</sup> From this it is clear that during the earlier stages of his scholarly life Kenrick's vision of the nature of Christ was that he was merely human and consequently his thought on this crucial point was in accordance with the Socinian tradition.

With regard to this nothing changed as time went by. His arguments in the two small theological works which were published later in his life reflected a belief in Christ as a holy teacher inspired by God. In *Holy Scriptures*, for example, Kenrick argued that the relationship between Christ and the Father was the same as that between Christ and his disciples, and that they were as one in

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<sup>142</sup> John Kenrick, *The Authority of Jesus, as a divinely inspired Teacher, sufficient for the Evidence and the Efficacy of Christianity: A Sermon, Preached Before the Western Unitarian Society at Lewin's Mead Meeting, Bristol* (Bristol, 1836), p. 9.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

spirit, purpose and affection. The unity of Christ with the Father, he emphasised, was not some mysterious union of their natures, but one of counsel and subordination of the will of one to the other.<sup>144</sup> Eleven years later, in one of his last works, *Biblical Essays*, which appeared in 1864, Kenrick alluded once again to his belief in Christ's simple humanity when he argued that the history of Christian dogma had shown a tendency to elevate Christ's dignity in proportion to the lapse of time and the change in his relationship with his followers, a tendency which 'placed him more beyond the sphere of humanity'.<sup>145</sup> Thus it would appear that there was no change in his belief with regard to this fundamental aspect of Socinianism in his later life.

Similarly, the complementary themes of the original purity of the primitive Christian faith and the debasement of this by doctrinal 'systems' and 'corruptions' remained, as they did in the mind of Joseph Priestley, key aspects in Kenrick's thought. On the subject of early Christianity, in 1808 there appeared in the *Monthly Repository* a translation by Kenrick, then aged only twenty, of a short passage by the German critic, Ludwig Timothy Spittler.<sup>146</sup> This extract reflected Spittler's ideas of the effect of Christianity on the moral and intellectual condition of mankind in the period preceding the Council of Nicaea in the fourth century

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<sup>144</sup> Kenrick, *Holy Scriptures*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>145</sup> Kenrick, 'The Gospel of Mark the Protevangelium', in *Biblical Essays*, p. 53.

<sup>146</sup> John Kenrick, 'Extract from Professor Spittler's "Elements of Ecclesiastical History"', *MR* vol. 3, 1808, pp. 72-74. Spittler, whose name appears to have been given incorrectly here as 'Spiltler', was Professor of Philosophy at Göttingen and the work from which this passage was taken was published in 1791. Spittler was the teacher of Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren (1760 – 1842), who became professor of history at Göttingen and under whom John Kenrick studied when he spent his year in Germany in 1819-1820. See Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Los Angeles, 1975), pp 173-179. For a comparative analysis of the work of English radical biblical critics and their German counterparts, see chapter 4, below.

AD. Spittler wrote that the great fundamental truths about the unity of God had been brought into being by Christianity as never before.

However, he pointed out that the primitive Christians were a 'different race' from those of the third century because of the early degeneracy of the church, and it was this 'corrupt system of morals' which was a major cause of the appearance of a 'Christian religion very different from [that] which its design and its earliest appearance promised'.<sup>147</sup> Spittler's thoughts were influenced by an intellectual background which set great store by the idea that moral and spiritual changes in history brought about awakenings which were essentially new,<sup>148</sup> and by implication uncorrupted. While for the German the important elements here were the ebb and flow of moral and spiritual forces in history, for Kenrick, however, the passage suggested that it had been later influences which had undermined the purity of the early faith. This was why Kenrick had picked this particular passage for his own purposes as a Unitarian critic who was anxious to establish the purity of early Christianity and its difference from later forms of belief.

A second theme in this extract from Spittler's work which had attracted Kenrick was the idea, strikingly similar to that of Joseph Priestley,<sup>149</sup> that the idea of the unity of God was held both by the young and illiterate of early

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>148</sup> Reill, *German Enlightenment* pp. 172-173. Reill sees these critics of the German Enlightenment, such as Spittler and Heeren, as precursors of a more historicist understanding of the past which was more characteristic of the Romantic Age. Unlike many other modern writers, Reill's view of the German *Aufklärung* is that it formed in this particular sense a continuity with the historical ideas of the later Romanticism.

<sup>149</sup> Joseph Priestley, 'A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God; and Against the divinity and Pre-Existence of Christ; from Reason, From the Scriptures, and From History', in *Tracts, Printed and Published by the Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue* (London, 1791), vol. 1, pp. 205, 209.

Christianity, whose instruction had been neglected by philosophers.<sup>150</sup> This argument Kenrick repeated almost twenty years later, in June, 1827. He advocated that there should be an appeal on behalf of Unitarianism to the ordinary classes of England on the grounds that in the early ages of the church it had been those plain and illiterate men who 'held fast to the doctrine of the Divine Unity'. In contrast, it was those philosophical and learned minds who were persistently absorbed in subtle speculations regarding the nature of God and the person of Christ, who had formed doctrines which subsequently had 'usurped the place of the primitive faith'.<sup>151</sup> Pure and unpolluted religious truth, therefore, was to be found in the ranks of the unlearned classes rather than with those who were intellectually sophisticated, for it had been the latter who had distorted the simple tenets of early Christianity.

In 1817 Kenrick mounted an angry denunciation of the doctrines of Calvinism, which he described as a 'fearful and revolting system'.<sup>152</sup> In particular, the 'system[s] of theology of human invention'<sup>153</sup> which had constructed the ideas of atonement and predestination had consigned God's creatures 'to everlasting torments for even the slightest shades of sin'.<sup>154</sup> In the same year he gave a lecture on the 'Love of Truth' in which he argued against benevolence inspired by self interest, and wrote that it would be wrong to use such motives as these when 'we attempt to diffuse his religion, or restore its

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<sup>150</sup> Kenrick, 'Extract from Spittler', p. 73.

<sup>151</sup> John Kenrick, *Obstacles*, p. 33.

<sup>152</sup> John Kenrick, *Unitarianism the Essence of Vital Christianity: A Sermon Preached at George's Meeting, Exeter, July 10, 1817, Before The Members of the Western Unitarian Society and of the Devon and Cornwall Association* (London, 1817), p. 24.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

doctrines to their primitive purity'.<sup>155</sup> In the following year, 1818, he challenged the idea that the Jews at the time of Christ had believed their Messiah was divine. He wrote that even when the process whereby this 'great corruption' of Christianity was engineered it had been clear that the judgement of the primitive Jewish church was 'in favour of the Unitarians'.<sup>156</sup>

Ten years later, in 1827, Kenrick's argument on the subject of a pure religion which had been corrupted was expounded in a similar way to that historical concept of theological development which had been used by Priestley in his *Corruptions*, the idea of a relationship between the emergence of doctrine and the context of a particular age. Kenrick wrote that we may attribute the existing corruptions of Christianity to the authors who supposed they had the warrant of scripture for their various systems. This happened in the ages of 'barbarous ignorance' which followed the gospel era, and it should be appreciated how widely different were the language, manners and opinions of the Christian church from those of the Eastern people by whom the gospels were written.<sup>157</sup>

With regard to the progressive religion which Kenrick and his fellow Unitarians advocated in their own time he argued that 'nothing is more certain than that it must receive modifications from the intellectual state of the world'...no [false] doctrines can ultimately prevail among a people allowed to think and

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<sup>155</sup> John Kenrick, *The Love of Truth: A Branch of the Duty of Benevolence* (Birmingham, 1817), p. 59. This was Kenrick's contribution that year to the Oldbury Double Lecture.

<sup>156</sup> Kenrick, *Son of God*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>157</sup> Kenrick, *Obstacles*, pp. 28-29.

examine for themselves'.<sup>158</sup> In both these instances, like Joseph Priestley, he has credited the cultural and intellectual mores of particular ages with the responsibility for the creation of different doctrinal forms, the one corrupt, the other pure and founded upon scriptural truth.

As regards the ideas of original purity and later corruption Kenrick's later writings showed the same concerns. In 1853, in a review in two parts of a work by the German critic C.C.J. Bunsen (1791-1860), Kenrick commented upon Bunsen's findings in a manner very similar to the way in which Priestley had followed the threads of the development of doctrine. Like Priestley, Kenrick believed that behind the tangled web of theological systems and metaphysical speculations which had produced all the doctrinal absurdities of orthodoxy shone the pure light of original truth. He observed how Bunsen had managed to trace the progress by which the mass grew from the simple form which was used in the second century.<sup>159</sup> The German had translated the Ethiopic Liturgy from the Greek original to discover a 'relic of Christian antiquity....a very remarkable

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-27.

<sup>159</sup> John Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Hippolytus – Ancient and Modern Christianity', *CR*, vol. 9, February 1853, p. 76. This was a review article of Christian Charles Josias Bunsen's, *Hippolytus and his Age, or the Doctrine and Practice of the church of Rome Under Commodus and Alexander Severus: and Ancient and Modern Christianity and Divinity Compared, in Four Volumes* (no date given). The work by Bunsen, who was a Prussian diplomat as well as a scholar and theologian, was an analysis of a newly-discovered manuscript attributed to Hippolytus, a third century Roman bishop and martyr. Hippolytus described the faith, ritual and legislation of the church at the beginning of the third century and the text was characterised by great perception and learning. Bunsen presented his analysis of Hippolytus' thoughts on the early church's views on the canon of scripture, the person of Christ, Christian ordinances and other topics. In his review, Kenrick explained that Bunsen had tried to deduce not only what Christianity had been like at the beginning of the third century. Due to the fact that Hippolytus had been a pupil of Irenæus, who had in turn been a disciple of Polycarp, who had been at Ephesus and a disciple of St. John, Bunsen had hoped also to discover from Hippolytus' writings the true doctrines of the apostolic age. See John Kenrick, 'Christianity in the Third Century', *CR*, vol 9, January 1853, p.1. Bunsen's analysis was, consequently, of great interest to a scholar such as Kenrick, whose concerns were the origins of the Christian faith.



composition' and Kenrick agreed with Bunsen's commendation of its 'simplicity and scriptural character'.<sup>160</sup>

Kenrick, however, was quick to point out not only that the ancient document showed the clear outlines of a simple form of worship, but also that it revealed no suggestion either of Christ's divinity in any orthodox or Arian sense, nor of his atonement for the sins of man. Indeed, he went so far as to suggest that, although the phraseology of the rite was not entirely as one might wish, only the over-critical Unitarian would refuse to join in were it established in church usage.<sup>161</sup> In his conclusion on this point he wrote that 'we have here a fresh proof that the further we go back in Christian antiquity, the nearer we come to a purely Unitarian doctrine'.<sup>162</sup>

On the question of corruption, Kenrick cited the example of the distortion over time of the simple idea of commemoration at the Lord's Supper, which had contributed not only to the establishment of the false dogma of transubstantiation, but also to the elevated role of the priest as special functionary at the ritual, a role which destroyed the original concept of communion. He wrote that Bunsen's opinion that this corruption of the simple words of Christ was 'the greatest with which the Roman Church is chargeable' was entirely justified. Kenrick's view was that, had the Christian Fathers kept to the 'simple language of the Gospels and St. Paul, which describes the Lord's Supper as a commemoration, the mischief would have been avoided'.<sup>163</sup> Thus

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 74, 76.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p 76.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Kenrick. 'Christianity in the Third Century', p. 8.

for Kenrick, as for Priestley, truth lay at the origins, the untainted 'primitive nucleus', of the Christian faith. Bunsen's analysis of the work of the third century martyr Hippolytus reached back historically towards the traditions and doctrines of the apostolic age. Consequently, it proved to be an important text for Unitarians such as Kenrick, whose prime objective as radical scholars was to prove their point regarding the truth that primitive Christianity was, in all crucial respects, essentially Unitarian.

Also abundantly present in Kenrick's writings on biblical criticism were his thoughts on the two subjects of plenary inspiration and historical interpretation which, of course, from the Unitarian perspective tended to sit uneasily with one another. As we have seen, when the idea began to develop amongst radical critics that the events and the doctrines of the Bible were the result of historical influences, belief in the notion of verbal inspiration had begun to weaken.<sup>164</sup> This pattern of thought was evident also in Kenrick's work. In 1821, he wrote a review article on the German critic J.S. Semler (1725-1791), who had become professor of theology at Halle in 1753.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn., 1974), p. 160. To quote Frei in full on this point may be useful here. He writes that, 'With the rise of historical criticism and the gradually developing sense that all, including miraculous and other distinctly archaic statements in the Bible are the products of genuine historical conditioning, and not merely the author's or speaker's (or even God's) accommodation to the original readers' level, the author's intention came to be undergirded or superseded as an explanatory factor by the cultural condition out of which the text arose.'

<sup>165</sup> John Kenrick, 'Biographical Sketch of J.S. Semler', *MR*, vol. 16, February, 1821.

On Semler's highly controversial view, presented in the early 1770s,<sup>166</sup> that the Bible was not identical with God's word, Kenrick observed that in this work on the canon of scripture, Semler had tried to 'correct the inaccurate notions which prevailed on this subject' and had shown that the Jews themselves meant by *canonical* not inspired works but instead a collection of national literature.<sup>167</sup> This rejection of the idea of verbal inspiration was accompanied in the same year by a precise explanation of the historical method with regard to the Bible. To his readership, Kenrick explained that, in order to conduct a rational interpretation of scripture, ancient languages, manners and customs must be studied, and the critic should estimate the influence of education and circumstances on the 'modes of thought and turns of expression' of the writers.<sup>168</sup>

The general weakening of the idea of inspiration was countered by an increasingly confident belief in the historical method as the most effective way to a rational evaluation of the biblical texts. In an analysis which showed that the proven length of the Egyptian chronology undermined the truth of the chronology of Genesis, Kenrick criticised those who thought that when the accuracy of a narrative was questioned, 'they can quiet doubts by appealing to its inspiration'.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 161-162. Frei writes that Semler also stated that the question of the unity of the canon was purely historical and that it should be determined by the consideration of each book in its own historical context. Semler's view was that some books were only of historical rather than theological interest. Frei believes that because Semler made this differentiation between different kinds of religious truth and meaning he may be considered as one of the prime leaders of historical theology, the 'younger relative' as he puts it, of the historical criticism which was to develop in the nineteenth century.

<sup>167</sup> Kenrick, 'Sketch of J.S. Semler', p. 138.

<sup>168</sup> John Kenrick, *The Temper and Manner in Which Inquiry into the Doctrines of Religion should be Conducted: a Discourse, Delivered at Halifax, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1821, before the Association of Presbyterian Ministers of the West Riding of Yorkshire and the West Riding Tract Society* (London, 1821), p. 25.

<sup>169</sup> Such was the practice, he added, of many who would not allow the philosopher to read anything in the archives of nature 'nor the historian in the early annals of the world, which is not consistent with what they deem the authority of revelation'. <sup>170</sup>

The critic should never, Kenrick argued, 'fall ... into the fallacy of assuming the supernatural as the proof of the historical'. <sup>171</sup> To believe that the credibility of a history may be established by the assumption of its inspiration is 'to invert the true order of proceeding'. <sup>172</sup> He explained that were it the case that historical facts could be proved to be true and yet 'no human appeared by which such truth could be ascertained, there would remain only the supposition of a divine communication'. <sup>173</sup> This, however, could never actually occur, because the very process of presenting historical truth implies the existence of 'independent evidence of the facts which it contains'. <sup>174</sup> Thus the supernatural origin of any historical document cannot ever be the basis of belief in its historical authority. <sup>175</sup>

The dominant theme of the work by Kenrick published in 1853 was the assertion that the idea of verbal inspiration had undergone great modification, 'wherever men allow themselves to think freely on religious subjects'. <sup>176</sup> Freedom of thought, however, was not an option for all critics, for inevitably there was always some level of bias generated by the belief of the critic. The Roman

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<sup>169</sup> John Kenrick, 'Biblical Gleanings from Recent Works on Egyptian Antiquities', *MR*, New Series, vol. 5, May 1827, p. 320.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> John Kenrick, *An Essay on Primæval History* (London, 1846), p 58.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p 6.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> John Kenrick, *Holy Scriptures*, p. iii.

Catholic commentator, for example, 'boasts of an infallible guide, and believes his safety to consist in following blindfold'.<sup>177</sup> Likewise Protestants depended upon the unchallengeable truth of certain texts to prove their doctrines, and to disprove the texts' authority would mean to deny the doctrine.<sup>178</sup> Undeniably then, the doctrine of inspiration was a powerful force for orthodoxy and for the defence of false dogma.

Kenrick's counter attack was founded upon the idea of re-casting the doctrine. Rather than being presented as the belief that every word was dictated by God, he showed that both Old and New Testaments represented in a wider sense 'parts of a system of divine communication to man'.<sup>179</sup> This was a

Revelation of that system of grace and truth, of pardon  
and eternal life which he preached, because we see no  
human source from which it could have been derived.<sup>180</sup>

This amended view of inspiration, which explained divine influence in a much more generalised form, did not then conflict with an unbiased, rational, historical method of interpretation of the scriptures. In effect it served the Unitarian objective, which was to release the questioning mind from any perceived necessity to cling to doctrinal presuppositions and consequently opened the door to free inquiry regarding the truth and meaning of the scriptures. The religious ideas of the authors of scripture were not a repetition of divine dictation, but were conceived by men and expressed 'under the influence of the time and countries

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

to which they respectively belong'.<sup>181</sup> There were, according to Kenrick, 'no worse expositors than those who trust to inspiration to qualify them.... [their] crude fancies...bring contempt on the sacred volume'.<sup>182</sup> Because the idea of inspiration had been modified in this way, for Kenrick and his fellow radical scholars the true doctrines revealed in scripture could then be seen to have been formed in a relationship with the historical context in which the narratives had been written.

The Unitarians were not, of course, the only ones to seek historical evidences of the authenticity of the scriptures. Orthodox critics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also were intent on proving their truth. They, however, approached the exercise from a perspective which sought historical evidences to prove what they already assumed to be true on the basis of divine revelation. The Bampton Lecturer James Williamson, Prebendary of Lincoln said that he did not believe, however, that such assumptions amounted to a 'blind acquiescence' in the scriptures and added that each man was 'at full liberty to examine with candour the grounds and evidences of Christianity'.<sup>183</sup> Williamson thought that the evidences of a written revelation was a secure method of conveying the doctrines of Christianity, and so strong was the proof that we could not refuse our assent to the whole of the divine revelation.<sup>184</sup> The orthodox idea was that historical evidences were admissible, but they only

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-76.

<sup>183</sup> James Williamson, *The Truth, Inspiration, Authority and end of the Scriptures, Considered and Defended* (Bampton Lecture, 1793), p. 102, quoted by H.H. McDonald, *Ideas of Revelation : An Historical Study, A.D. 1700 to A.D. 1860* (London, 1959), p. 130.

<sup>184</sup> McDonald, *Revelation*, p. 130.

served to support that which was already clear, that the Bible was God's word and that the internal evidences and authority of the Holy Scriptures were inescapable.<sup>185</sup>

For a later orthodox critic such as Thomas Hartwell Horne<sup>186</sup> the Bible could never have been the contrivance even of good men. He wrote that the 'wonderful harmony and connection' of the scriptures could not be ascribed to any other cause than 'their being all dictated by the same spirit of wisdom',<sup>187</sup> and that they were 'actually dictated by inspiration'.<sup>188</sup> Horne's work contained a large section on historical interpretation which formed the whole of the third volume. Entitled a 'Summary of Biblical Geography and Antiquities', it was essentially a descriptive part of the work which dealt with the political, legal and cultural mores of the Jews at the time of Christ. There was no real sense that Horne was trying to assess the importance of aspects of scripture by relating them in any meaningful way to the contextual background. The historical element in Horne's work was simply that and nothing more – a background, and there is no feeling of relationship between it and the simple doctrines of Jesus Christ's ministry.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1856). The first edition of this work was published in 1818 and thereafter it ran to ten editions. The edition cited here is the tenth. T.H. Horne, of St. John's College, Cambridge, was Rector of the United Parishes of Saint Edmund the King and Martyr and Saint Nicholas Acons, Lombard Street; Prebendary of St. Paul's. His four-volume work may be seen as an example of some orthodox views of the approach to inspiration, history and the significance of these two factors in relation to biblical criticism.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p. 404.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., pp. 200, 201.

<sup>189</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 481. This example, which describes early Christian hospitality to strangers, also quotes from Matthew xxv, 41, 45, the passage in which Christ warns that at the day of judgement those who had not welcomed strangers were in peril. The quotation and the context are not eased into any historical relationship, the one is simply matched to the other in what is essentially a form of juxtaposition.

John Kenrick's view of a historical analysis of the Bible was quite different. He thought that because a historical view arranged events in their chronological sequence and their 'true historical relation' it clarified our understanding of them. Even the political background and the relationship between Israel and other lands were important to the significance of scriptural events, and it was indeed true that the most impressive passages of the prophets would be unintelligible without this kind of knowledge. The life of Christ himself was

a narrative of ever growing interest, from the commencement of his ministry to the catastrophe of its close; many of his actions and sayings derive their significance and pertinency from the seasons at which they were delivered...<sup>190</sup>

The truth of Christ's doctrines were to be discovered *within* that relationship between him and the context in which he lived and preached. Christ was consequently a *historical* figure whose teachings had to be seen in relation to the culture of the time. Similarly, the genuineness of Paul's Epistles was to be found in a comparison of them with the history of his life, and to understand them 'we must know in what circumstances they were written'.<sup>191</sup> According to Kenrick there were no special principles of scriptural interpretation. The best commentary would 'explain them as ... any other book', aiming only to set forth the author's meaning'.<sup>192</sup> The truth of this lay in the relationship between his

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<sup>190</sup> Kenrick *Holy Scriptures*, p. 71.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.



writings and the context in which they were composed, and in the historical veracity of his sources and his proximity to them

These are criteria which Kenrick explored in his analysis of Mark's gospel, which was one of the most illuminating examples of his historical criticism. Not only did he examine the meanings of texts in relation to their historical and linguistic contexts, but in his commentary on Mark, Kenrick also spelled out some of the rationale behind his own method. Most importantly, however, the analysis presented a frame of mind which isolated and defined the outlines of biblical narrative in a historical fashion, rather than one which brought separate accounts into one harmonious whole for the purposes of defending orthodox doctrine.

The definitive version of the analysis of Mark appeared in *Biblical Essays*, which was published in 1864. As early as 1827, however, in a review article on a work by the German theologian Frederick Schleiermacher (1768-1834),<sup>193</sup> Kenrick had already revealed that frame of mind which sought to define the uniqueness of different perceptions of Christ's ministry. Kenrick agreed with Schleiermacher that there was little to recommend the hypothesis of Johann Gottfried Eichhorn that the variations in gospel accounts may be explained by the existence of an original document outlining the principal facts of Jesus' life and ministry which had been adapted differently by each writer. A more compelling perspective, Kenrick believed, was Schleiermacher's assessment of Luke's

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<sup>193</sup> John Kenrick, Review Article on Frederick Schleiermacher, *A Critical Essay on the Gospel of St. Luke: With an Introduction by the Translator, Containing an Account of the Controversy respecting the Origin of the First Three Gospels since Bishop Marsh's Dissertation* (London, 1825), *MR*, New Series, Vol. 1, January, 1827, pp. 33-39.

gospel on its own terms and the fact that the German called attention to those elements which were inconsistent with Eichhorn's hypothesis. Eighteen years later, in 1845, Kenrick wrote of his belief that Mark's gospel was not, as was widely believed by some, a mere epitomisation of Matthew, but an original source 'respecting the life and preaching of their Master, in the earliest period'.<sup>194</sup>

In a 'retrospective' review article published in 1850,<sup>195</sup> Kenrick's intention was to argue against the view of the German New Testament scholar J.J. Griesbach, that Mark had epitomized Matthew and Luke and instead wished to 'claim for him [Mark] the character of being the earliest of our Lord's biographers.... writing nearest to the time and with the most exact recollection.... the colours of memory...yet warm and glowing'.<sup>196</sup> Kenrick noted that there was a 'rough simplicity' in Mark's version of events, and a tendency by him to write simply to record, rather than to impress and convince as did Matthew and Luke.

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Kenrick defined his method in the inquiry as one which dealt with the evangelists as human biographers who neither possessed any supernatural sources of knowledge, nor were 'guarded from error by any divine superintendence'.<sup>198</sup> Rather, they were men like ourselves, and 'exposed to the influences of their age, their country and their personal connections'.<sup>199</sup> This and this alone had to be the criterion for criticism, for, he wrote, the '*Deus ex*

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<sup>194</sup> John Kenrick, 'On the Narratives of the Crucifixion', *CR*, New Series, vol. 1, April 1845, pp. 204-206.

<sup>195</sup> John Kenrick, 'The Relation of the Third to the First Two Gospels', Review Article of *Jo. Jac. Griesbachii Commentatio quo Marci Evangelium totum a Matthæi et Lucæ Commentariis decerptum esse monstratur* (Opuscula Academica, Vol. 11., ed. Gabler (Jenæ, 1825), *PR*, vol. vi, 1850.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 64, 66.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 72.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

*machina* puts an end at once to all human agency, and all reasoning upon human probabilities'.<sup>200</sup> Here contained in Kenrick's reasoning on Mark's gospel, there is the gist of the whole question of divine inspiration in the orthodox sense as opposed to historical criticism. The artificial systems of dogma devised by man cannot resolve the contradictions of scripture, only reason and historical interpretation are able to unravel such mysteries.

Mark's gospel, according to Kenrick, was not derived from any other document. Furthermore, it was not a composite, an epitomisation or an abbreviation of any other writer or writers, but simply a completely original account written by Mark himself. The idea was not new. Nathaniel Lardner's analysis of the gospel concluded that Mark was not an 'epitomiser of another author' and that he was 'well acquainted with the things, of which he undertook to write a history'.<sup>201</sup> Mark wrote as an eye witness and as one who had authentic information at first hand. His gospel was 'a very valuable and masterly performance'.<sup>202</sup> John Kentish was persuaded also that 'Mark is an independent memorialist of our Lord's actions and discourses'.<sup>203</sup> In a similar vein, Herder had declared that Mark's account was the earliest written gospel. According to Herder, Mark's gospel had an oral-like, narrative quality, while Luke's account was more that of a practised historian.<sup>204</sup> In a letter written to John Kenrick while Kenrick was studying in Göttingen in 1819, Thomas Belsham wrote that 'Matthew

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Lardner, 'St. Mark, Evangelist', in Supplement to Vol. 1 of *Credibility*, p. 208.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Kentish, *Passages of Scripture*, p. 160.

<sup>204</sup> See Marcia Bunge, 'Text and Reader in Herder's Interpretation of the New Testament', in Wulf Koepke (ed.), *Johann Gottfried Herder: Language, History and the Enlightenment* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1990), p. 144. See John Kenrick, *Biblical Essays* (London, 1864), p. 6. On Luke's 'historical' version, Kenrick's views are the same as Herder's.

has been more corrupted than any of the rest; and Mark, perhaps, the least, because of its brevity'.<sup>205</sup>

For Kenrick, who was part of that radical scholarly tradition which sought to reveal the earliest truths of Christianity, Mark's gospel was highly significant in that it came closer than any other to the historical truth about Jesus' life and ministry. It stood alone as a truthful and uncorrupted version and was unique in its proximity to the historical times of Christ. For the reason that it showed no traces of second hand authority,<sup>206</sup> it handed down the tradition of Jesus' life in an earlier form than the work of the other evangelists.<sup>207</sup> As one example, Kenrick pointed out that Mark began his account with the preaching of John the Baptist, without mention of the birth or childhood of Christ contained in Matthew and Luke. He concluded that the absence of this part of Christ's history in Mark was clear evidence that he was not a copier of the other two gospels and showed that his account reflected the untainted early origins of Christianity. While the texts of Matthew and Luke indicated that they had distorted the story of Christ by juxtaposing events and narratives outwith their true contexts, Mark's gospel, according to Kenrick, was 'perfectly homogeneous'<sup>208</sup> and stood alone as a historically valid account with priority over the others.<sup>209</sup> Kenrick wrote that

As a conglomerate implies the previous existence of strata, whence its materials have been derived, so the composite nature of the first and third gospels indicates

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<sup>205</sup> Williams, *Memoirs of Thomas Belsham*, p. 705.

<sup>206</sup> Kenrick, *Biblical Essays* (London, 1864), p. 10.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

a later origin than that of the second, whose structure is simple and uniform.<sup>210</sup>

Kenrick uses here a geological analogy to argue that Matthew and Luke were in fact rather artificially constructed versions of events which had been distorted by the passage of time and the unreliability of human memory. In the analysis of these gospels we should be aware, Kenrick wrote, of 'those variations and accretions which gather ...around the original nucleus of facts'.<sup>211</sup> By contrast Mark's gospel was unpolluted historical truth, and because of this Kenrick considered it to have great value as a testimony to the facts on which the universal Christian religion was founded. He believed that the nearer the historical critic could come to the time of events and facts, the greater the possibility of 'receiving them unmixed with fable'.<sup>212</sup> Religious history, he thought, was far more liable to corruption than the secular and with this in mind he conceded that it might not be possible for the historian to eliminate entirely distortion, corruption and exaggeration from the narrative. Indeed the only way to control the propensity to corrupt a simple tradition and to have a chance of attaining pure and simple historical truth was 'to ascend as near as possible to its springhead'.<sup>213</sup>

This quotation, in essence, represented the fundamental nature of Kenrick's thought with regard to historical biblical criticism. He was a radical critic in the tradition of Rational Dissent whose theologian position was similar to that

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-64.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

of Joseph Priestley. As such he was committed to the search for the simple truth of early Christianity before it became corrupted by the irrational dogma of subsequent ages. It was this quest for the 'springhead' of truth which formed the basis of Kenrick's historical frame of mind and the need to seek the untainted origin of Christianity which drew the patterns of his historical thought.

John Kenrick was a product of a tradition which, in pursuing a search for the truth about early Christianity, modified the influence of the doctrine of verbal inspiration and put its faith instead in the method of historical biblical criticism. Discarding the artificial harmonisation of the gospels, it was a tradition of historical criticism which in Kenrick recognised the contradictions in the accounts as proof of uniqueness in a historical sense. His objective was to get as close as was possible to the earliest origins of the gospels, both in terms of the events themselves and in the manuscripts which had recorded them. Kenrick's analysis of Mark's gospel was symbolic of this form of criticism. It was a rational approach to scriptural interpretation which saw the historical method as the most rational of all. Kenrick's method, and that of his predecessors, was to prise away the accretions of time, whether they took the form of harmonisations, composites or the corruptions related to false doctrine, and find the unspoiled origin, the 'primitive nucleus' sought by Joseph Priestley which represented a perfect truth. John Kenrick, therefore may be placed firmly in the context of Unitarian historical criticism and within the theological precepts which gave it impetus.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **UNITARIANS AND GERMANS.**

The historical frame of mind with which the scholars of Rational Dissent approached the scriptures in order to reveal the origins and nature of a primitive, unspoiled Christian religion, was similar in many respects to that of critics of the German Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*. The common objective of English and German scholars was to apply reason to scriptural interpretation and to make use of the historical method in their analyses. The study of the engagement of Rational Dissent and Unitarianism with German thought in this respect was a complex relationship which has brought to light a number of important issues.

The main objective of this chapter is to outline some aspects of the relationship between radical English and German scholars in the latter half of the eighteenth century and the earlier decades of the nineteenth century with regard to historical biblical criticism. It will try to determine some reasons why the scholars of Rational Dissent were attracted to German ideas in the first place and what were some of the results of this encounter. It is important to understand the similarities and differences between them, for these help to explain the nature of their historical understanding in general.

John Kenrick's introduction to Unitarian historical biblical criticism and the German approach to scriptural interpretation took place in the earlier period of his intellectual life, before 1819. Kenrick was taught German in his early teenage

years by the rather eccentric writer and composer Thomas Foster Barham (1766-1844),<sup>1</sup> whose brother, John Foster Barham (1763-1822) was a distinguished German scholar, a member of the Germanophile circle at Cambridge and an acquaintance of the German rationalist scholar Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761-1851).<sup>2</sup> Thus the young Kenrick had a good knowledge of the German language even before he became a pupil of the Unitarian scholar John Kentish, whose knowledge of German and German biblical critics was sound. Many years later John Kenrick wrote that Kentish had 'made himself master of German, that he might read the works of Michaelis and Eichhorn'.<sup>3</sup>

Kenrick's interest in German scholarship was intense. During the three years before he left England to study in Germany in 1819 he was a regular customer of the London – based bookseller and importer of German books, J.H. Bohte.<sup>4</sup> Bohte's catalogue of 1816 listed almost 1,700 titles in German for sale in Britain. The selection of authors included the writers and dramatists A.F.F. von Kotzebue (1761-1819) and J.W. Goethe (1749-1832), and also the poets C.M. Wieland (1733-1813) and F.G. Klopstock (1724-1803). Also listed were the dramatist, poet and historian J.C.F. Schiller (1759-1805), the Schlegel brothers, August Wilhelm (1767-1845) and Karl Wilhelm (1772-1829), and the philologist and folk lore writer Jacob Grimm (1785-1863). Works of J.G. Herder, G.E.

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<sup>1</sup> James Martineau, *In Memoriam : John Kenrick* (London, 1877), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Frida Knight, *University Rebel : The Life of William Frend, 1757-1841* (London, 1971), p. 67. In his theological works Paulus denied the possibility of the supernatural and explained away the miracles as either stories told in error or mistaken opinions.

<sup>3</sup> John Kenrick, *Memoir of the Rev. John Kentish* (Birmingham, 1854), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> See J.H. Bohte, *A Catalogue of Books in Various Languages* (London, 1816). This catalogue gives some idea of the very wide range of German literature which was available to scholars at the time. Clearly, by the middle of the second decade of the nineteenth century, for those who could read them, there was a very wide selection of German works on the market, and many of them in the field in which Unitarian scholars were interested.



Lessing (1729-1781) and J.G. Fichte (1762-1814) were also available in German. In addition, there were listed many publications by the German mythologists, C.G. Heyne (1729-1812) and G.F. Creuzer (1771-1858), the biblical critics Eichhorn, Mosheim, Semler and J.A. Ernesti (1707-1781), and the historians A.H.L. Heeren (1760-1842) and B.G. Niebuhr (1776-1831). The catalogue listed also almost a hundred different volumes on German language and grammar. Consequently, for those who could afford these books and who could read German, there was a wide and varied selection available.

In this short period there were several letters from Kenrick to the Manchester College trustee George William Wood (1781-1843) on the subject of German books and payment for them. Wood, who was to become an MP whose bill in favour of the admission of Dissenters into the English universities was defeated in the House of Lords in the early 1830's, was for many years the treasurer of Manchester College in York. In 1815 Kenrick wrote, 'As to Bohte, I presume he would give you a receipt to your house in London for the *Reiske's Oratores Graeci*'.<sup>5</sup> In another letter to Wood in December of the same year Kenrick referred to 'my German bookseller, J.H. Bohte'.<sup>6</sup> Just over two years later, in February 1818, Kenrick wrote again that he would be grateful for Wood to 'send Mr. J.H. Bohte, York Street, Covent Garden, on my account, a bill for £17.19.6d and to let me have the difference of that and £50'.<sup>7</sup> It would seem

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<sup>5</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, 25 February 1815, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 29. Johann Jacob Reiske (1716-1774), born in Prussia, was a highly esteemed scholar of Greek, Byzantine and Arabic literature whose commentaries on works in Arabic laid the foundations of Arab historical scholarship.

<sup>6</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, 14 December 1815, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 37.

<sup>7</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, 4 February 1818, HMCL, MS. Wood, fol. 69.

then that this young scholar absorbed the work of some German writers at a comparatively young age.

After his visit to Germany in 1819-1820 for a year of study in Göttingen and Berlin, the emphasis of Kenrick's intellectual concerns shifted to history, philology and to a greater understanding of the role of myth both in relation to the Bible and to the history of the ancient world. The ideas he inherited from the Unitarian tradition of biblical interpretation, however, remained with him for the rest of his life. It is important to set out the context of German scholarship in which those ideas developed, and to try to outline similarities and differences between Germans and Unitarians in the period. Only in this way will it be possible to discover which ideas, whether home-grown or German, were projected on to later aspects of Kenrick's historical thought.<sup>8</sup> As an aid to this, the final part of the chapter will be devoted to an assessment of the weight of importance of radical English and German ideas on biblical criticism on the intellectual development of John Kenrick.

In England, in general terms, it was not until 1790 that there was any adequate appreciation in intellectual circles of much that was German.<sup>9</sup> Previously there had been a tendency to favour French literature and opinions and to a significant extent the consequence of this was a widespread ignorance

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<sup>8</sup> See chapters five, six, seven and eight below.

<sup>9</sup> V. Stockley, *German Literature as Known in England, 1759-1830* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1949), pp. 1-2. For a more scientific and quantitative assessment of the extent to which German works appeared in English literary journals in this period, see B.Q. Morgan and A.R. Hohlfeld, *German Literature in British Magazines, 1759-1860* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1949). This study came up with some interesting conclusions indicating that German works which were associated with the 'universally human characteristics of the pre-classical and classical writings of the eighteenth century in Germany' were more prevalent in British literary journals in the period. These, according to the study, were consistently more popular than volumes which reflected the subjectivity and imagination of German literary Romanticism which became available in Britain in the early decades of the nineteenth century. See p. 113.

of the German language, a scarcity of books and a lack of good translations. Although the last decade of the eighteenth century in England did see some interest in popular German plays and novels, the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century, during which intellectual exchange with Europe was curtailed by the Napoleonic Wars, witnessed a general apathy towards German literature. The fortunes of the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) with English readers followed this general pattern. Herder's famous work, *Outlines of the Philosophy of the History of Man*, appeared in English translation in 1800,<sup>10</sup> and a year later the English literary elite saw the publication of an anonymous translation of Herder's *Oriental Dialogues*. There followed, however, a gap of more than quarter of a century until the next translation of Herder. This was another anonymous work, rendering into English the German's work on language, *Über den Ursprung der Sprache*,<sup>11</sup> which appeared in 1827. It was not really until around 1830 that a true familiarity with aspects of German language, literature and philosophy, including that of Herder, was to be found in cultured circles.

It was the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), himself a Unitarian of the 'old school' during the 1790's, who was largely responsible, of course, for the fact that German literature came to be more widely appreciated in England in the earlier nineteenth century. During his trip to Göttingen in 1799 Coleridge encountered the most eminent scholars, among them Mosheim, Michaelis, Heyne, Eichhorn, the philosopher F.H. Jacobi (1743-1819) and the

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<sup>10</sup> J.G. Herder, *Outlines of the Philosophy of the History of Man*, translated by T. Churchill (London, 1800).

<sup>11</sup> Stockley, *German Literature*, p. 111.

anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840). This period at Göttingen coloured the rest of his productive life and his ideas on criticism, religion and metaphysics all reflected the Romantic notions which he experienced during his visit.<sup>12</sup>

It has usually been supposed that it was by the 1790's that there existed some awareness amongst radical scholars and liberal Christians of German historical biblical criticism. This knowledge was most evident in Unitarian circles of the time and it was here that the work of the Germans was most keenly sought.<sup>13</sup> However, well before this date there had already been established a tradition of intellectual cross communication between the scholars of Rational Dissent and some German biblical critics in relation to both Old and New Testaments. Nathaniel Lardner's vast work, *Credibility of the Gospel Story*,<sup>14</sup> was translated volume by volume as it was produced in English. The Dutch translation of the first volume by Cornelius Westerbaen of Utrecht was published in 1730 and a Latin version appeared in Bremen in 1733. A German translation by David Bruhn, of Memel in Prussia was published in Berlin and Leipzig in 1750, and later German editions followed, up to the fourth volume, which was published in 1751.<sup>15</sup> The translation of the first part of Lardner's work into German contained a lengthy preface written by Sigmund Jacob Baumgarten (1706-1757),

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Holmes, *Coleridge : Early Visions* (London, 1989), p. 221.

<sup>13</sup> John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (London, 1984), pp. 158-159. See also p. 159, notes 4-7.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter two, above.

<sup>15</sup> *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Late Reverend Nathaniel Lardner* (London, 1769), pp. 124-126. See also *The Works of Nathaniel Lardner, with a Life by Dr. Kippis*, 10 vols (London, 1835), pp. 194-195. See, in addition, Booklets with Notes, Notes on Nathaniel Lardner, DWL, MS. 12.54.

who taught both J.D. Michaelis and J.S. Semler<sup>16</sup> and who is credited with being, in philosophical terms, a transitional figure between Wolffian rationalism and the new concerns with a historical approach to the Bible.<sup>17</sup>

Another work of Lardner's, entitled *Vindication of the Three Miracles*, was translated into German by a minister called Meyerburg and was published in Zell in 1750. Lardner's *Discourses on the Circumstances of the Jewish People* appeared at Halle in 1754 and a translation into German of the *Treatise on the Demoniacs* was published in Bremen in 1760. Clearly, the scholarly fame of the English Socinian Lardner, who had studied at Leyden from 1699 until 1702 or 1703, had spread widely and his works 'rose higher in esteem and reputation among the most eminent divines at home and abroad'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed fully a century later Lardner's proud reputation in Germany still remained firmly in place, for in 1855 one German theologian remarked in a journal article that Lardner's defence of the credibility of the gospels against the Deists had been so powerful that they had been used in his own time in the controversy with Strauss.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791), was professor of philosophy from 1746 and oriental languages from 1750 at Göttingen. Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791) became professor of Theology at Halle in 1753. It would be difficult to exaggerate the contribution made by them to the historical method in biblical criticism.

<sup>17</sup> Baumgarten's most famous pupil, J.S. Semler, who became head of the theological faculty at Halle after Baumgarten's death, himself confirmed his mentor's transitional position on the question of historical investigation of biblical texts. See Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Los Angeles, 1975), pp. 43 and 232, n. 51. It is not surprising then that Baumgarten took great interest in Lardner's ideas about using external secular sources to confirm the truth about the events described in gospel texts.

<sup>18</sup> William Turner, *Lives of Eminent Unitarians* (London, 1840), p 141.

<sup>19</sup> Dr Schwarz, in *Protestantisch Kirchenzeitung*, 27 January 1855. See Booklets with Notes, DWL, MS 12.54, note 26. Here, presumably, the writer is referring to D. F. Strauss (1808-1874), the controversial German theologian whose *Leben Jesu* was first published in 1835. The English version, translated by George Eliot, appeared in 1846. In the work, Strauss sets out to prove that the gospel accounts were a collection of myths within which traces of historical truth were to be found. See chapter 5, below.

Lardner's friend and contemporary George Benson,<sup>20</sup> was credited seventy or so years later by John Kenrick himself with being one of those English Presbyterian Dissenters who gave to the Germans ideas about the rational interpretation of those parts of scripture which were 'most wrested to the support of orthodoxy'. Kenrick wrote that 'Michaelis and Semler were the disciples of Benson, Peirce and Hallett'. In their defence of revelation against the Deists of the time, men such as Benson developed a better system of interpretation and one which conformed with 'that freedom of thought and investigation which is the heritage of Dissenters'.<sup>21</sup> However, the relationship of critics such as Benson to the better known German thinkers was not simply one of a degree of influence, it was often one of friendship too. A brief letter written in Latin to Benson in 1755 by J.D. Michaelis, the content of which suggests that the German has sent his English friend a book which he recommends highly, is not only polite and gracious, but reveals also a warmth and familiarity.<sup>22</sup>

While Lardner and Benson were credited with exerting an influence on German critics, not many years later the intellectual currents were flowing in the other direction. The Unitarian social reformer and critic John Jebb (1736-1786), for example, was acquainted with the work of Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), the Swabian New Testament critic and philologist. In his own notes written in 1769 for a proposed New Testament commentary Jebb indicates that the introduction to the Greek text will give reasons for it 'in the manner of Bengelius'.

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<sup>20</sup> See chapter 2, above.

<sup>21</sup> John Kenrick, 'Biographical Sketch of J.S. Semler', *MR*, vol. 16, February, 1921, p. 66.

<sup>22</sup> J.D. Michaelis to George Benson, May 1755, JRUL, Unitarian Collection, MS. Box B1-16 / B-23.

<sup>23</sup> Bengel was one of a group of theologians who rejected typological or figural interpretations in relating Old and New Testament events in favour of a more historical view of the scriptures. In addition, Bengel believed that inspired passages of scripture were meaningful, not only because they were the word of God, but also because they referred to events in a historical sequence. <sup>24</sup>

In the 1760s and 1770s Jebb was also familiar with the work of the Swiss critic Johann Jacob Wetstein (1693-1754), whose preparation of a critical edition of the Greek New Testament caused him to be charged with Socinianism and heresy in 1729. It was precisely this work, along with its controversial prolegomena which, in 1772, in a course of theological lectures, Jebb recommended to students for general use as they were 'not unworthy of ...notice'. <sup>25</sup> At the same time, Jebb pointed out the value of the introductory lecture to the study of the Greek Testament by J.D. Michaelis. <sup>26</sup> Michaelis was the orientalist famous for his incisive historical method in biblical criticism and for his commentaries on the Mosaic law. He argued that the ancient Hebrew laws could only apply to the context in which they were formed and therefore could not be considered by Christians as universally applicable moral guides of timeless relevance. <sup>27</sup> Michaelis wrote that that the Mosaic laws, though good for the ancient Israelites, were not 'absolutely and universally the best, not yet to be

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<sup>23</sup> John Jebb, Notes of a Plan of a Commentary on the New Testament, dated 22 May 1769. DWL, MS. 171-172.

<sup>24</sup> Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn., 1974), pp. 175-176.

<sup>25</sup> John Disney, *The Works, Theological, Medical, Political and Miscellaneous, of John Jebb, MD, FRS, with Memoir of his Life by the Author*, 3 vols. (London, 1788), vol. 1, p. 58.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Michaelis's famous work *Mosaisches Recht* was first published in 1770-1771. The English version translated by Alexander Smith appeared much later. See J.D. Michaelis *Commentaries on the Laws of Moses*, 4 vols (London, 1814).

imitated by every people', and indeed they should be worthy of our attention 'only as the laws of a very remote country, and as relics of the most ancient legislative system'.<sup>28</sup> Of all German historical biblical critics Michaelis was one of the most familiar to both early and later radical English scholars.

Not only were critics such as Lardner, Benson and Jebb part of this intellectual ebb and flow. Joseph Priestley, the most important radical theological innovator of the period, also contributed to the cross current of ideas between England and Germany. Ted Letis argues that Unitarians including Priestley, who were known to German thinkers, made an important contribution as pioneers of historical biblical criticism and in many respects were precursors of the Germans. Accordingly, radical thinkers in England were more responsive to the ideas of German critics when the flow of influence changed direction in the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Letis is correct in his analysis, but provides no evidence to support it.

However, it is clear that not only were the critical works of early radicals such as Lardner available to German scholars, but there is also evidence to show that the same applied to some works by Joseph Priestley. Priestley's contribution to the ideas of his European counterparts was a reflection of his achievements as a polymath. The subject matter of those works which appeared in several languages ranged from dissertations on grammar, oratory<sup>30</sup> and natural philosophy to history, politics, government and religion.

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<sup>28</sup> Michaelis, *Laws of Moses*, vol 1, Art 6, pp. 17, 19. See Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>29</sup> Ted Letis, 'From Sacred Text to Religious Text: An Intellectual History of the Impact of Erasmian Lower Criticism on Dogma as a Contribution to the English Enlightenment and the Victorian Crisis of Faith', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1995, p. 276.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Priestley's *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, which appeared in 1777, was translated into German and published in Leipzig in 1779 and in Berlin in 1793 and 1797. For this and the



During the course of the latter decades of the eighteenth century approximately thirty five works by Priestley appeared in foreign languages. Due to the fact that Priestley's reputation as a chemist reached far beyond the boundaries of his native England a number of works on natural philosophy appeared in both French and German. These works included *The History and Present State of Electricity*, first published in 1767.<sup>31</sup> Although the French were also greatly interested in Priestley's works on history, politics and government,<sup>32</sup> it would appear that only one small work on a religious topic was published in France. Entitled *Exposé de l'évidence de la religion révélée*, and published in Paris in 1822, this was an extract from a collection of *Sermons Extracted from Dr. Priestley's Discourses*, which first appeared in 1794.

The most significant feature of the list of Priestley's foreign publications is that the great majority of those works on Unitarian theology and historical criticism which were translated into foreign languages were published in Dutch and German. The first part of the exposition, *Letters to a Philosophical*

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following information on foreign translations of Priestley's works I am indebted to the late John Stephens who was director of Waterfields, the antiquarian booksellers in Oxford.

<sup>31</sup> The French translation *Histoire de l'Électricité traduite de l'anglois de Joseph Priestley*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1771) appeared with critical notes by M.J. Brisson. The German version, *Geschichte und gegenwärtiger Zustand der Elektrizität nebst eigenthumlichen Versuchen...Aus dem Englischen übersetset...von D. Johann Georg Krünitz* was published in Berlin in 1772. There was also a Dutch translation, *Geschiedenis en Tegenwoordige Staat der Electriciteit*, which appeared in Amsterdam in 1772-3. Another work by Priestley on natural philosophy which was translated into both French and German was *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air*, published in 1774, also appeared in Italian. There were both French and German translations of Priestley's work of 1779, *Experiments and Observations Relating to Various Branches of Natural Philosophy* and as late as 1799 there was published in Philadelphia a French version of a Priestley work on phlogiston.

<sup>32</sup> Priestley's *Description of a Chart of History*, published in 1769, appeared in Dutch in 1782 and in French in 1784. His *Lectures on History and General Policy* (1788) were translated into both these languages in 1793 and in 1796-7 respectively. Both Dutch and French scholars also received versions of Priestley's 1793 work *Letters Addressed to the Philosophers and Politicians of France*. The French alone, however, were interested in a work of 1791, *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, which appeared in France later the same year.

*Unbeliever*, which was Priestley's challenge to David Hume's doctrines of natural religion, appeared in German in 1782.<sup>33</sup> Four years later, in 1786, a minor work entitled *Forms of Prayer for the Use of Unitarian Societies* was translated and published in Berlin.<sup>34</sup> In 1787, Priestley's appeal to the Jews to discuss with him the Unitarian form of Christianity, which was characterised by the concept of the unity of God, appeared in both Dutch and German.<sup>35</sup> A later work, his *Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos and other Ancient Nations*, could be read in German by 1801, after it was published by Braunschweig.<sup>36</sup> Most interesting of all, however, was the publication in Berlin and Hamburg in 1785, three years after it first appeared in England, of Priestley's key text on historical criticism, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, under the German title of *Geschichte der Verfälschungen des Christenthums*. Consequently, important works by Priestley which dealt with controversial religious opinions, comparative religion and, in Priestley's *Corruptions*, a form of historical criticism which linked dogma to historical context were read by German scholars.

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph Priestley's *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, Part 1, first published in London in 1780, appeared in Leipzig in 1782. The work was sold to German scholars under the title *Briefe an einen philosophische Zweifler in Beziehung auf Humes Gespräch über das System der Natur u. ähnliche Schriften. Aus dem Englischen*.

<sup>34</sup> The German title was, *Liturgie und Gebetsformeln zum öffentlichen für Christen von Allen Confession... Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Mit einer Vorrede: Ueber die Möglichkeit und den Werth eines allgemeinchristlichen Gottesdienstes von H.A. Oistorius*.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Letters to the Jews; inviting them to an amicable discussion of the Evidences of Christianity* (Birmingham, 1786), was published in Frankfurt a year after it first appeared in England. The German version was entitled *Briefe an die Juden, um sie zu einer freundschaftlichen Untersuchung der Beweise für das Christenthum einzuladen. Aus dem Englischen des Joseph Priestley nach der zweyten vermehrten Ausgabe*.

<sup>36</sup> The original English version was published in Northumberland, Pennsylvania in 1799. The title of the German translation of 1801, with an introduction in German, was, *Priestley's Vergleichung der Gesetze des Moses mit denen der Hinduer und anderer alten Nationen... verdeutscht und mit einem erläuternden Anhang begleitet von Johann Wilhelm Heinrich Ziegenbein*.

Conversely, Priestley depended on German scholarship to a large extent in some of his works. In his key text, *Corruptions of Christianity*,<sup>37</sup> for example, there are more than eighty references to the work of the theologian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1694-1755). Mosheim, professor of divinity at Göttingen from 1747, was the Lutheran ecclesiastical historian who emphasised the importance of the objective, critical treatment of original sources, and who widened the contexts of church history to encompass secular historical themes. It was natural that Mosheim's rational, critical observations on scripture would appeal to Priestley in his attempts to argue the Unitarian case on many important theological topics.<sup>38</sup>

In general terms the Unitarians were the intellectual group who were most aware of German ideas on scriptural interpretation in this earlier period, and the extent of their engagement with German works was very wide. As E.S. Shaffer correctly points out, the assumption that George Eliot's translation of D.F. Strauss's *Life of Jesus* in 1846 was the beginning of the reception of the biblical higher criticism in England is entirely wrong, for the principles on which Strauss had based his ideas were already in place by the 1790s.<sup>39</sup> As works by German scholars found their way to England in the late decades of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth centuries, Unitarian contemporaries of Priestley and those who followed him became acquainted with ideas from a foreign land which in many respects mirrored their own views on the interpretation of scripture.

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (London, 1871).

<sup>38</sup> See below.

<sup>39</sup> E.S. Shaffer, *Kubla Khan and the Fall of Jerusalem: The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature 1770-1880* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 22.

There were several groups of Unitarians who seized upon German ideas in the latter decades of the eighteenth century and some were better known than others.<sup>40</sup> Those close to John Kenrick, of the generation of his father, Timothy Kenrick (1759-1804), who had been schooled in the Socinian theology of Joseph Priestley, formed one of the groups who have been virtually ignored by historians of ideas. These writers were involved with German thought in relation to historical biblical interpretation and were most receptive to certain German ideas.

Thomas Belsham was a loyal intellectual follower of Joseph Priestley.<sup>41</sup> Born in Bedford in 1759, Belsham was the most highly regarded of this post-Priestleyan group, and had a key role in maintaining the Unitarianism of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries within the boundaries of associationism and necessitarianism which had been drawn by Priestley. By this time, largely due to Belsham, Unitarianism's arguments had become very one sided in favour of the Socinian, monist, Priestleyan world view and the frame of mind which had favoured the dualism and philosophical liberty of Richard Price had begun to fade in the intellectual mists.<sup>42</sup>

Belsham engaged in many public arguments and debates in defence of both the Unitarian position and his own published critical works until his death in 1829.

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<sup>40</sup> Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, p. 159. One such group existed in Cambridge in the late 1780s. It consisted of radical thinkers such as William Frend (1757-1841) and other Cambridge Unitarians, some of whom met Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761-1851) in 1788. See Frida Knight, *University Rebel: The Life of William Frend, 1757 – 1841* (London, 1971), p. 67. Paulus was the rationalist Tübingen scholar who became professor at Jena and produced works which asserted the impossibility of the supernatural and explained miracles as being nothing more than mistaken impressions.

<sup>41</sup> For example, the intellectual position of Belsham's philosophical work, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind and of Moral Philosophy: To Which is Prefixed a Compendium of Logic* (London, 1801) was virtually identical to that of Joseph Priestley.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Fitzpatrick, 'This Candid and Liberal Method: The Teaching of Philosophy in the Liberal Dissenting Academies of the Late Eighteenth Century in England', in Colin Richmond and Isobel Harvey (eds.) *Recognitions: Essays Presented to Edmund Fryde* (University of Wales, 1996) pp. 502-503.

<sup>43</sup> A powerful defence was often needed, for his views were as radical as those of Priestley, and Belsham sought evidence for their validity in the new historical approach to the interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. Despite his tireless efforts in this area, however, Belsham is usually mentioned only in passing in accounts of the development of historical criticism in England. <sup>44</sup> He was completely ignored by the nineteenth century writer Leslie Stephen, who confined his own analysis of the Unitarians to Gilbert Wakefield (1756-1801), the biblical critic Edward Evanson (1731-1805) and to Joseph Priestley himself. <sup>45</sup>

It is surprising that more attention has not been given by historians of ideas to Belsham, for by the early decades of the nineteenth century this radical critic <sup>46</sup> was in some respects at the epicentre of interest in the new historical biblical criticism which had arisen in both England and Germany. Belsham's engagement with German ideas on biblical criticism was quite extensive despite the fact that it appears he could read little or no German. In a letter written to

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<sup>43</sup> For example, two works, both published in London in 1815, defended Unitarianism against orthodox attack. See Thomas Belsham, *Letters Addressed to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London, In Vindication of the Unitarians*, and *Tracts in Controversy with Bishop Horsley, With Notes by the Editor, To Which is Annexed an Appendix, Containing a Review of the Controversy, in Four Letters to the Bishops, By the Same Author*. In addition, Belsham's works reflected his appreciation of the spread of Socinianism. In the same year, 1815, there was published in London an extract from an American journal, the *Panoplist* of Boston, which had contained Belsham's analysis of American Unitarianism, entitled 'Socinianism Unmasked: A Review of American Unitarianism, or, a Brief History of the progress and present State of the Unitarian Churches in America, Compiled by the Rev. Thomas Belsham of London'. See also works written in defence of his own publications, for example, *A Vindication of Mr. Belsham's New Translation and Exposition of the Epistles of Paul* (London, 1825) and an appendix to this published separately and entitled, *Extracts from the Writings of Eminent Divines of the Church of England, On the History of the Creation and Fall, on Justification, And on the Inspiration of the Apostles: Being An Appendix to A Vindication of Mr. Belsham's Translation and Exposition of the Epistles of Paul* (London, 1824).

<sup>44</sup> See Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, p. 159. The perceptive Unitarian biographer, Alexander Gordon, however, is more expansive and gives Belsham his due credit in a whole chapter of his *Addresses Biographical and Historical* (London, 1922), pp. 304-307. Francis Mineka's work *The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944) also gives Belsham a little credit for his work on biblical criticism. See p. 132.

<sup>45</sup> Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1881), vol. 1, pp. 427-446.

<sup>46</sup> For an outline of Belsham's ideas, see below.

John Kenrick in Germany in 1819, Belsham confided that he would 'give a great deal' to be able to read or to hear Eichhorn's lectures upon the Old and New Testaments.<sup>47</sup>

Belsham's inability to understand the language meant that he and many others turned to any German works in English which were available at the time. This meant that non-German speaking radical scholars were most closely acquainted with the ideas of Johann David Michaelis.<sup>48</sup> Professor of philosophy (1746) and oriental languages (1750) at Göttingen until his death in 1791, Michaelis was a pioneer of historical criticism who integrated Old Testament scripture with ancient life. The translation by the Germanophile Herbert Marsh (1757-1839) of Michaelis's *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, the *Introduction to the New Testament*, was published in Cambridge between 1793 and 1801.<sup>49</sup> This was essentially a historical evaluation of New Testament scripture which denied the doctrine of inspiration. Michaelis wrote that the question whether the books of the New Testament were inspired was not as important as the question of 'whether or not they are genuine'. The truth of our religion depends upon the latter, 'not absolutely on the former'.<sup>50</sup> Michaelis's most famous pupil, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, who succeeded him as professor of oriental languages and

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<sup>47</sup> Williams, *Memoirs of Belsham*, p. 704. Although the biography does not specifically state that this letter was to John Kenrick, who was Belsham's step-nephew, the recipient of the letter is confirmed as Kenrick by Alexander Gordon in his *Addresses*, p. 304. Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752-1827) is regarded by many as the founder of modern Old Testament criticism, and his influence on biblical scholars in this period cannot be underestimated. See T.K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism* (London, 1893), pp. 13-26.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Belsham, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle, Translated, With an Exposition and Notes* (London, 1822), p. xxv. Belsham quotes extensively from the English translation of Michaelis.

<sup>49</sup> Herbert Marsh (1757-1839), the Anglican scholar who became Bishop of Peterborough, studied in Leipzig under Michaelis between 1785 and 1792, during which time he corresponded with Griesbach regarding his New Testament studies. The edition of the work he translated which is cited in this thesis is John David Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London, 1802).

<sup>50</sup> Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 72.

biblical exegesis at Göttingen, wrote that this work was 'indispensable to every theologian – a genuine magazine of critical learning'.<sup>51</sup>

Thirteen years later, Michaelis's commentaries on the Mosaic laws as unrelated to the idea of universal Christian morality revealed his rejection of the Old Testament as infallible and an acceptance of its historicity. The Jews were an ancient people who should be seen as having their own place in the stream of history, and their laws appropriate for their own time and circumstance. As these laws were unique to their particular historical context, so were their other writings, which were a form of early poetry and mythic expression.<sup>52</sup> Eichhorn wrote that under Michaelis's guidance others had been inspired to investigate the scriptures historically, from the spirit of ancient times and the 'antiquities, customs, opinions and modes of thinking'.<sup>53</sup>

Michaelis developed some of these ideas after he had read Robert Lowth's<sup>54</sup> *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, which were first delivered in 1749-1750 in Latin, and these Michaelis translated into German. Lowth was the very first scholar to realise that the Old Testament contained poetry and literature and indeed J.G. Herder, whose attention had been drawn to Lowth's work by Michaelis, was compelled then to write his own contribution to this train of thought in *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie, The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, in 1782. Thus the ideas of Lowth in relation to the literary content of the Old Testament had been absorbed and refined by these German writers and

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<sup>51</sup> J.G. Eichhorn, *An Account of the Life and Writings of John David Michaelis* (Edinburgh, 1835), p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> Reill, *German Enlightenment*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>53</sup> Eichhorn, *John David Michaelis*, p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Lowth (1710-1787) became professor of poetry at Oxford in 1741, Bishop of St. David's in 1766 and Bishop of London in 1777. His work, entitled *De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum*, was published in 1753.

subsequently re-entered English historical-critical circles in a form which gave force to historical ideas of the cultural development of the ancient Jewish nation.

In the works of Michaelis which were translated into English, there appeared three important radical ideas. Firstly, Michaelis rejected the infallibility of ancient scripture and its application to Christian morality of the Mosaic laws, which were relevant only to the ancient Jewish people at a particular time in their history. This implied a sense of moral relativism with regard to past ages. Secondly, he regarded the origins of the history of the ancient Hebrew nation as built around the primitive mythic creations of a poetic age. This tended towards the concept of uniqueness in the idea of historical beginnings and, by implication, later cultural development. Thirdly, his analysis of the New Testament was not one based upon any doctrine of inspiration, but rather one formed around a consciousness of the historical importance of the biblical texts and the relationship between religion and the culture of the age. All this conformed with the radical forms of interpretation characteristic of the latter part of the eighteenth century, both in Michaelis's homeland and in England.

Michaelis was an influential intermediary between radical scholars in England and Germany at this time,<sup>55</sup> and the translation of his work was a godsend to those English critics who could not read German. In a review of an article by Belsham published in 1807, the author recorded Belsham's praise of Marsh's translation of Michaelis and his hope that someone equally qualified would 'perform the same office for Eichhorn, which Mr. Marsh has performed for

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<sup>55</sup> Shaffer, *'Kubla Khan'*, p. 20.



Michaelis'.<sup>56</sup> In Michaelis there is a clear example of German scholarship which proved a magnet for inquiring scholars such as those of the Unitarian creed. Thus the ideas of one of the most controversial German biblical critics of the time were diffused amongst those radical English biblical critics whose minds were open to new thoughts on the historical content and meaning of both Old and New Testaments.

Belsham's studies, which were enhanced by the reading of critics such as Michaelis, led him into a wide correspondence with others of like mind. He was well acquainted with the youthful Boston clergyman and biblical critic Joseph Buckminster (1784-1812), who was responsible for the introduction to American scholars of many German works, including the critical edition of the New Testament produced by the German scholar Johann Jacob Griesbach (1745-1812).<sup>57</sup> The German's work was published in America in 1809 and in the following year Buckminster wrote to Thomas Belsham regarding another edition of the New Testament, this time by the rationalist H.E.G. Paulus. Buckminster told Belsham that the work had 'greatly excited his curiosity' and wondered if it were possible to find someone in England who 'will give the English an

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<sup>56</sup> Review of Thomas Belsham, *A Summary View of the Evidence and Practical Importance of the Christian Revelation, in a Series of Discourses Addressed by Young Persons, by Thomas Belsham, Minister of the Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street* (London, 1807), in *MR*, Vol. 2, May 1807, p. 271.

<sup>57</sup> Griesbach followed Bengel and Johann Salomo Semler in that he divided the NT manuscripts into three main groups, the Western, the Alexandrian and the Byzantine and analysed the probability of the truth of aspects of the NT by comparing them with the three texts. Those readings, for example, which were supported by all three texts – or by two, particularly if they were the Western and the Alexandrian – were then considered by Griesbach to be genuine. Griesbach, who was one of J.S. Semler's most enthusiastic disciples, first published his three – volume critical edition of the New Testament at Halle in 1774-1775. Two years later, all the historical books were reprinted in one volume, the original synoptical arrangement of the gospels having been abandoned. Griesbach's work represented a rational, analytical approach to the history of the production of the gospels and an evaluation of the truth, or otherwise, which they contained. It was not surprising, therefore, that Unitarians were attracted to his method. See below.

opportunity of knowing what Eichhorn or Paulus or some other German [theologians] have done for biblical literature' ?<sup>58</sup>

Almost a decade later, in 1819, Edward Everett (1794-1865), the Boston Unitarian divine who had received a doctorate from the University of Göttingen two years earlier, wrote to Belsham from Rome on the subject of a letter he, Everett, had received from Eichhorn himself. The German had told Everett of an essay he had published which explained away miracles relating to the departure of the Jews from Egypt as natural phenomena. Eichhorn had also written on Old Testament material and had divided the translations of the prophets chronologically. The book of Isaiah Eichhorn had related to different periods of two hundred years apart, 'which', wrote Everett to Belsham, 'changes the whole disposition of these books.'<sup>59</sup>

Eichhorn's general conclusions about the writings of the Old Testament exposed radical English critics to the most controversial critical ideas of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Writers such as Belsham would have been made aware of the core tenets of a critic such as Eichhorn, by scholars who *had* mastered the language. The Scottish Roman Catholic critic Alexander Geddes (1737-1802), for example, was one of these intermediaries. Geddes' own work, which included a new translation of the Bible produced in the 1780s and 1790s, denied the doctrine of inspiration and interpreted early Hebrew writings as mythology.<sup>60</sup> Geddes' interpretations of the Old Testament were approved by Germans and Unitarians alike. Both Michaelis and Eichhorn

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<sup>58</sup> Joseph Buckminster to Thomas Belsham, 14 July, 1810, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Edward Everett to Thomas Belsham, 1819, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24. 107, 20.

<sup>60</sup> Shaffer, '*Kubla Khan*', pp 26-27.

praised his enlightened approach to the Hebrew cosmogony and, as he grew more and more radical in his ideas, his scholarly relationships with Unitarians, including Joseph Priestley himself, blossomed.<sup>61</sup>

Eichhorn, who has been described as the 'founder of modern Old Testament criticism',<sup>62</sup> had been a pupil of Michaelis and also of the classical philologist C.G. Heyne. From Michaelis he had learned the importance of historical context as a defining factor in the understanding of ancient manuscripts. From this had developed Eichhorn's fascination for the vital question of the authorship of Old Testament texts and accordingly, he followed the general thrust of the radical German scholarship of the time. Rather than regarding ancient texts purely as the infallible fruits of divine inspiration, critics were tending to see them more in the light of historical documents whose characteristics were determined by the time and circumstance in which they had been produced. Although he did not go as far as denying the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Eichhorn challenged its unitary nature by dividing the ancient texts into two distinct sources with regard to the different names of God in each, Elohim and Jehova.<sup>63</sup> This introduced the idea of a historical element in the authorship of the first five books of the Bible, and undermined the orthodox view that these ancient texts were the inspired work of one author.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.27. See also Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, 2005), p. 245. At the turn of the century Geddes was attacked along with German biblical scholars by publications such as the *Anti-Jacobin Review* of 1798-1800. There was, the journal claimed, a disdain for religion which had been epitomised by 'the principles of Eichhorn'. Quoted from the *Anti-Jacobin Review* 6 (1800), pp. 563, 571, by Sheehan, *Enlightenment Bible* p. 245.

<sup>62</sup> Cheyne, *Founders*, p.13.

<sup>63</sup> Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 19-21. See esp. p. 21.

Belsham and his contemporaries in England became aware of ideas such as these from this new German source. This is not to say that every Rational Dissenter-Unitarian of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries read all of Michaelis and everything penned by Eichhorn, whose works were never translated into English.<sup>64</sup> Despite this, however, the nature of the English-German intellectual exchange, blurred as it was by the language problem, was that the core ideas of these German thinkers were nevertheless available to all who were interested.

Those whose intellectual achievements included a knowledge of German were able to draw directly on their writings. John Kenrick's father, the Unitarian commentator Timothy Kenrick (1759-1804), wrote a New Testament analysis in which he placed New Testament events and persons in contexts which reflected the customs and attitudes of the age.<sup>65</sup> Many of the elder Kenrick's ideas were derived from his own intellectual tradition, with references to such writers as Lardner, Lowth, Priestley, Philip Doddridge and Gilbert Wakefield. Wakefield himself drew upon the works of German thinkers in the classical mould and was interested in the ideas of Heyne.<sup>66</sup> Added to these sources in Kenrick's work

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<sup>64</sup> There had been a project, initiated by Herbert Marsh, then Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and A.H. Loyd, Professor of Hebrew, in the last two years of the eighteenth century, to translate Eichhorn. However, due to lack of support and money, it came to nothing. See Shaffer, 'Kubla Khan', p. 22.

<sup>65</sup> Timothy Kenrick, *An Exposition of the Historical Writings of the New Testament*, 3 vols (Birmingham, 1807). The work was published posthumously. A memoir by the scholar and Unitarian divine, John Kentish (1768-1853) noted that Kenrick's objective was 'to discover and communicate the pure doctrines of the gospel'. See John Kentish, 'Memoirs of the Late Rev. Timothy Kenrick' *MR*, vol. 3, February 1808, p. 65.

<sup>66</sup> See *A Catalogue of the Very Elegant Classical and Critical Library of the Late Rev. Gilbert Wakefield, editor of Lucretius, Pope's Homer etc., and Author of Various Publications, Sold at auction by Leigh, Sotheby and Son, Booksellers, York Street, Covent Garden, On Thursday, March 25, 1802, and Six Following Day*. (London, 1802). There are almost 1,500 works on the list. For Heyne's works, see items 35, 427, 954 and 956. There were also in the library works by the German classical and Arabic scholar Johann Jacob Reiske (1716-1774). See items 244, 251, 315, 765, 925 and 995. A controversial writer,

were the critics E.F.K. Rosenmüller (1768-1835), Schleusner, Griesbach, Michaelis and Wetstein (1693-1754). The latter was a Swiss scholar who contributed to biblical criticism a methodical account of biblical manuscripts and readings, but who was accused of heresy after his critical edition of the New Testament was believed to have favoured Arian and Socinian views. Thus Timothy Kenrick's text showed clearly the mixture of English and German ideas which were regularly consulted by radical critics such as himself.

The scholar and Unitarian divine John Kentish was also closely engaged with the ideas of German critics in the period. In his work, *Notes and Comments on Passages of Scripture*, a collection of commentaries produced over the years and published in 1844, there were almost 270 sources listed, of which around 35 were German. The best known of the German sources are Bengel, Eichhorn, Griesbach, Johann Jahn (1750-1816),<sup>67</sup> Michaelis, Mosheim, the historian Niebuhr, the earlier critics Rosenmüller and Schleusner, the theologian F.E.D. Schleiermacher, Semler and Wetstein. John Kentish was not only an expert in German, but also read Hebrew, Chaldee and Syriac.

Information about these and other German critics was available in Unitarian journals. In the *Monthly Magazine* of 1800, for example, there appeared a twenty-four page summary of German language publications.<sup>68</sup> The list

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scholar and social reformer, Gilbert Wakefield (1756-1801) rejected his Anglican upbringing and adopted Unitarian doctrines. He was classical tutor at the Dissenting Academy at Warrington from 177 to 1783, and Joseph Priestley was among his fellow tutors. Although he never became affiliated to any specific creed Wakefield was well-acquainted with well known Unitarians such as John Disney (1746-1816) and Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), who had also rejected Anglicanism.

<sup>67</sup> Jahn was a Roman Catholic biblical critic and professor of oriental languages at Vienna from 1789. He was a controversial figure and a scholar who produced some radical interpretations of the chronology of Old Testament texts. See the analysis of John Kenrick's assimilation of German scholarship, below.

<sup>68</sup> See 'German Literature', in the *Monthly Magazine*, vol. 10, 1800, pp. 662-686.

included works on history, including a volume on ancient history by Eichhorn, and also on geography, natural philosophy, moral philosophy and metaphysics, citing works by Kant. Also included were books on philology, literature, education, law, medicine and divinity, along with a summary of publications in the catalogue of the Leipzig Easter Fair of 1800.<sup>69</sup> Among these was listed a commentary on the first three evangelists by Paulus, a work which was described by the reviewer as 'a very agreeable present'.<sup>70</sup> This journal therefore provided a comprehensive list of the leading German scholars in the field in various disciplines, including theology.

Another Unitarian publication given over to liberal theological views was the *Monthly Repository*. The early first series of this journal, which ran from 1806 to 1826, also featured a number of articles, many of them anonymous, which had been generated by the work and ideas of the Germans,<sup>71</sup> among them Herder, Michaelis and Eichhorn. Herder also, whose ideas on the past had a powerful influence on German Romanticism with regard to the formation of its historical consciousness, made some appearances in the journal during that period in which he was rarely mentioned in more orthodox publications.

The first of these was on a literary theme and consisted of three short translations from Herder and Goethe by the Unitarian lawyer and diarist Henry

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 679-686.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 684.

<sup>71</sup> For a comprehensive history of the journal see Mineka, *Dissidence of Dissent*. Mineka points out that the great majority of contributors used only a pseudonym. This made the identification of authorship in many cases very difficult and in some, virtually impossible. Even the editor Robert Aspland himself did not know the identity of some of those whose articles, letters and translation appeared in the journal. Mineka has compiled a list of contributors who appeared in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The list includes writers with whom we are concerned here, for example Thomas Belsham, Thomas Foster Barham, Joseph Bretland, John Kentish, Henry Crabb Robinson, and John Kenrick. See Mineka *Dissidence of Dissent*, pp. 394-400.

Crabb Robinson (1775-1867).<sup>72</sup> Two years later, in 1808, Crabb Robinson wrote of Herder's historical genius with regard to his 'great connecting views of mankind...in which...a few favourite spots are elaborately wrought'.<sup>73</sup> In addition he noted the German's antipathy towards the metaphysics of scholasticism, and his apparent consideration of 'the trammels of logic as a bondage to a liberal mind'.<sup>74</sup> On a biblical theme, Herder's story about the death of Adam was the subject of a letter to the *Repository's* editor Robert Aspland,<sup>75</sup> and some months later, when Crabb Robinson's translation of Herder's *Paramythia* was published in the *Repository*,<sup>76</sup> the subject matter had turned to myth. Thus within a short three-year period, important aspects of Herder's thought had been given space in the journal.

As in all these publications, the content reflected the interests of its readers, and accordingly the *Repository* published from time to time work which made available German ideas to English readers and also accounts of the latest research by eminent German critics on biblical topics. In the early decades of the nineteenth century it published several reviews of lectures by Michaelis's translator Herbert Marsh, which were a guide to the discipline of biblical criticism and to the best critics in the field, citing the Germans Bengel, Wetstein,

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<sup>72</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, 'Translations from the German of Herder and Goethe', *MR*, vol. 1, February 1806, pp. 55-56. Like many contributors to the *Repository*, Crabb Robinson wrote under a pseudonym. His was 'Viator'.

<sup>73</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, 'Remarks on the Genius and Writings of Herder', *MR*, vol. 3, April 1808, p. 177.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>75</sup> Aspland was only twenty four years old when he took over the editorship of the journal in 1806.

<sup>76</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, translation, 'Paramythia: from the German of Herder', *MR*, vol. 4, March 1809, pp. 142-145.

Griesbach and others.<sup>77</sup> Marsh's lectures advised aspiring critics that 'the Bible must be examined by the same laws of criticism which are applied to other writings of antiquity',<sup>78</sup> and were greatly praised by the reviewer. There was, however, little doubt as to the most important part of Marsh's reputation, and that was the 'character under which he is known to the public most honourably and most usefully – as THE ANNOTATOR ON MICHAELIS'.<sup>79</sup> Three years later, in 1816, the reviewer wrote of the hope that Marsh would complete his plan of putting Michaelis's works within the reach of English scholars, thus adding 'new lustre to the name of *Dr. Marsh!*'.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to the regular publication of commentaries on its favourite critics, the *Repository* also kept track of the latest developments in German thought on the subject of biblical interpretation itself. In 1812, for example, there appeared a six-page article copied from the *Classical Journal* concerning some of the latest German publications<sup>81</sup> which carried the ideas of critics such as Michaelis and Eichhorn a stage further. W.M.L. de Wette (1780-1849) and his contemporary J.S. Vater, the orientalist who was professor at Halle from 1799 to 1809, argued that rather than the most ancient books of the Bible being, as Eichhorn believed, from two different sources, they were in fact fragments

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<sup>77</sup> Review of *A Course of Lectures containing a Description and Systematic Arrangement of the Several Branches of Divinity; accompanied with an Account both the Principal Authors, and of the Progress which has been made at different Periods in Theological Learning, by Herbert Marsh, D.D., F.R.S., Margaret Professor of Divinity* (London, 1810). The twelfth lecture, writes the reviewer 'is employed in an enumeration of the authors who have best explained the several departments of Hebrew criticism. Here we cannot fail to perceive that Dr. Marsh's acquaintance with the theological literature of the continent, enables him to execute this part of his undertaking with more than common advantage'. See *MR*, vol. 6, April, 1811, pp. 295-298, quoted at p. 297.

<sup>78</sup> Review, Marsh's *Course of Lectures*, *MR*, vol. 8, October 1813, pp. 673-677, quoted at p. 675.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 677. The capital letters are those of the reviewer.

<sup>80</sup> Review, Marsh's *Course of Lectures*, *MR*, vol. 11, October 1816, pp. 596-602, quoted at p. 602.

<sup>81</sup> 'Some Account of the Researches of the German Literati on the Subject of Ancient Literature and History', *MR*, vol. 7, May 1812, pp. 352-357.



entirely unrelated to one another. This, according to de Wette and Vater, proved that the Mosaic laws had in fact been imposed at a much later date, and that the Pentateuch was, like the work of Homer, merely a mythological account without any historical validity.<sup>82</sup> As T.A. Howard points out,<sup>83</sup> de Wette, who was more radical than Vater, laid the foundations for a shift away from an emphasis upon the historical validity of events and people involved in ancient narratives, and towards the history of the texts themselves and their authors, a tendency which had already developed in the work of some Unitarian critics.<sup>84</sup>

The article, which mentioned other German writers, some more famous, others lesser-known,<sup>85</sup> was accompanied by a translation of an extract from Eichhorn's commentaries on the book of Genesis.<sup>86</sup> Eichhorn argued that it had been the unadorned simplicity of the account of the humble life of a few shepherds in the infancy of the world which made us 'fully sensible of the pure sources from which [it] was derived'.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, non-German speaking readers of the *Repository* were made aware of two major themes of Eichhorn's work, the oral traditions and diversity of sources of which the book of Genesis was composed.

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<sup>82</sup> See Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 28-36 and Thomas Albert Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W.M.L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth Century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 40-43.

<sup>83</sup> Howard, *Theological Origins*, p. 42.

<sup>84</sup> See chapter three, note 112, above in relation to Thomas Belsham's view of the historical perspective which should apply to the author of the text.

<sup>85</sup> Mention is made of Griesbach, Rosenmuller, Johann Jahn of Vienna, and Paulus. The theologian and philosopher Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is listed too, in relation to a letter printed in Berlin in which he called into question the authenticity of the first epistle of St Paul to Timothy.

<sup>86</sup> Anon, 'Eichhorn on the Authenticity of the Book of Genesis', *MR*, vol. 7, May 1812, pp. 357-362.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362. The underline here is my own. Eichhorn's view was that the manuscripts of the Pentateuch were not unitary, but that the early Hebrew narratives had been derived from two different sources.

These two themes, which took the historical view that that Genesis was compiled from different manuscripts written at different times and in response to various sets of circumstances, were examined more closely by Unitarians almost a decade later in the years 1821 and 1822. At this time, along with summaries of the contents of his historical work on the New Testament,<sup>88</sup> five considerations of Eichhorn's older work on the Old Testament appeared in the *Repository*.<sup>89</sup> The first two were summaries of contents covering the canonical authority and history of the ancient Hebrew texts.<sup>90</sup> The remaining three, however, were translations of parts of Eichhorn's texts which included the views that Genesis was not verbally inspired,<sup>91</sup> but may have 'originated in human sources' and been 'handed down ... by means of oral traditions or scriptural records'.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, several chapters in Genesis appeared 'distinct, isolated records',<sup>93</sup> indicating a different authorship from the remainder. Because there are repetitions in the text, it would appear that Genesis may be a work compiled of 'two historical records, fragments of which are variously introduced'.<sup>94</sup>

Following this conclusion, Eichhorn wrote that, 'The record under the name of Jehovah inserts, as often as possible, fragments of poetry, those earliest

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<sup>88</sup> These summaries were of the contents of Eichhorn's *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament* (1804-1812). They gave a good indication to the *Repository* reader of Eichhorn's historical approach to 'higher criticism', the study of the origins, nature and authenticity of New Testament texts. See *MR*, vol. 16, March 1821, pp. 200-203, *MR*, vol. 16, May 1821, pp. 281-283 and *MR* vol. 16, June 1821, p. 335.

<sup>89</sup> These were taken from Eichhorn's older work, *Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament*, first published in German in 1780-1783.

<sup>90</sup> See *MR*, vol. 16, September 1821, pp. 511-513, and also *MR*, vol. 16, October 1821, pp. 582-584.

<sup>91</sup> See *MR*, vol. 17, August 1822, pp. 488-491, esp. p. 488.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>94</sup> See *MR*, vol. 17, September 1822, pp. 533-540, quoted at p. 533. This extract includes several pages of the Hebrew text which Eichhorn shows to sustain his argument.

historical documents of all nations'.<sup>95</sup> Thus both Michaelis and Eichhorn, who represented the first and second generation of the German historical biblical critics,<sup>96</sup> had presented to the Unitarian scholars, virtually all of whom subscribed to the *Repository*, a method which looked at the origins of ancient texts and the modes of ancient life with a sophisticated historical eye.<sup>97</sup> Not only that, but it was a perspective which understood that the development of the Hebrew nation, its customs and its laws, took shape in the same way as that of other ancient peoples.

Such ideas were not lost upon even the lesser known contributors to the journal. For example, in 1823 an extract was published posthumously of a work by one Henry Turner, a Unitarian minister, which emphasised the historical value of the Mosaic laws. His opinion was that it should not be forgotten that these laws were created for a 'temporary and peculiar dispensation' and gained their 'chief beauty and expediency' from being viewed in this way. These laws were, he added, misleading if regarded as 'permanent principles of true and acceptable religion'.<sup>98</sup> Thus some key ideas of German critics were seen as valid by Unitarian contributors who did not necessarily belong to the elite of biblical criticism.

Although much column space was given over to a host of diverse topics such as criminal law, funeral sermons, the Icelandic Bible, political analyses,

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<sup>95</sup> *MR*, vol. 17, October 1822, pp. 615-621, quoted at p. 616.

<sup>96</sup> Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>97</sup> See also *MR*, vol. 20, April 1825, pp. 194-204. This was a ten-page extract from a work of the German poet, dramatist and historian, J.F.C. Schiller (1759-1805), describing the historical circumstances behind some of the events which occurred during and after the foundation of the Jewish nation.

<sup>98</sup> Henry Turner, 'An Essay on the Nature and Design of Sacrifices under the Mosaic Law, and the Influence which Jewish Ideas and Language Concerning them had Upon the Language of the New Testament', *MR*, vol. 18, May 1823, pp. 270-275, quoted at p. 271.

biographies, obituaries, Unitarian Association reports, the nature of the brain, inns of Switzerland, Indian superstitions and animal rights, the *Repository* was essentially a treasure trove of radical theological opinion. It was by no means packed with articles about the work of German critics, but during the years of the first series, from 1806 to 1826, it rarely missed an opportunity to publish at least something related to the ideas of the German critics. In volume eight, published for the year 1813, out of a total of seven hundred and ninety eight pages, fifty one of them were given over to contributions related to German critics and criticism.

There were many good examples. There appeared discussions of Griesbach's texts, and of work by Michaelis on textual criticism. In a series of letters to the *Repository*, Thomas Belsham was closely involved in Mosheim's account of the beliefs of the learned early church father Origen (185-254) on whether or not the Jewish Christians were Ebionites who had rejected the virgin birth.<sup>99</sup> Another example was a biographical article by John Kentish on the German philosopher and scholar Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786),<sup>100</sup> who was a staunch defender of monotheism. There was clearly a regular and persistent appearance in the first series of the journal of German related critical articles over the period.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Thomas Belsham, 'Mr. Belsham on the Controversy between Dr. Priestley and Bishop Horsley; in Reply to the Strictures of the Rev. H. Horsley on the *Calm Inquiry*', *MR*, vol. 8, April 1813, pp. 240-244, *MR*, vol. 8, May 1813, pp. 294-297, *MR*, vol. 8, June 1813, pp. 383-388, *MR*, vol. 8, July 1813, pp. 450-453, *MR*, vol. 8, September 1813, pp. 583-588, and *MR* vol. 8, November 1813, pp.723-731.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221-226.

<sup>101</sup> This is an approximate assessment of the numbers of pages given over to German critics and related topics in each of the twenty one volumes. Volume 1 (1806) – 36 pages, vol. 2 (1807) – 19 pages, vol. 3 (1808) – 22 pages, vol. 4 (1809) – 42 pages, vol. 5 (1810) – none or very few, vol. 6 (1811) – 15 pages, vol. 7 (1812) – 10 pages, vol. 8 (1813) – 51 pages, vol. 9 (1814) – 12 pages, vol. 10 (1815) – none or very few,

Why was it that radical Unitarian biblical scholars were so attracted to the work of their German counterparts? The philosophical background and the theological objectives of the two sets of scholars in the English and German Enlightenments were very different. The radical scholars of Unitarianism had been schooled in the philosophy of Locke and the associationism of David Hartley, and perceived reality through the medium of empiricism. This meant that everything was discoverable if one looked hard enough. Many of them, like Joseph Priestley, had reacted against the Calvinism of their youth. They used the historical analysis of scripture and the examination of the validity of texts to try to prove the truth of their radical beliefs about the nature of Christ and to undermine the authority of orthodox doctrines such as the Trinity and the atonement. This kind of ‘root and branch’ historical examination and reconstruction of the scriptures was also a way to discover evidence to prove that the early Christians were Unitarians.<sup>102</sup>

In contrast, the critics of the German Enlightenment such as Semler and Michaelis, and later Eichhorn, had an intellectual background which had been dominated by the legacy of Leibniz, whose philosophy was founded upon the idea of contextual harmony.<sup>103</sup> The theological frame of mind of the writers of the *Aufklärung*, which was essentially a Protestant intellectual movement, had been

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vol. 11 (1816) – 11 pages, vol. 12 (1817) – 15 pages, vol. 13 (1818) – very few or none, vol. 14 (1819) – 8 pages, vol. 15 (1820) – one page, vol. 16 (1821) – 24 pages, vol. 17 (1822) – 26 pages, vol. 18 (1823) – 13 pages, vol. 19 (1824) – none or very few, vol. 20 (1825) – 17 pages and vol. 21 (1826) – 25 pages.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Joseph Priestley, ‘Appendix to the General Conclusion, containing a Summary View of the Evidence for the Primitive Christians Holding the Doctrine of the Simple Humanity of Christ’, in *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (London, 1871), pp. 317-318. The appendix which follows in this edition is entitled ‘Considerations in Evidence that the Apostolic and Primitive Church was Unitarian’ and deals with the same subject in greater detail. *Ibid.*, pp 319-336. See also Joseph Priestley, *An History of Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ*, 4 vols (Birmingham, 1786).

<sup>103</sup> Reill, *German Enlightenment*, pp. 6-7.

moulded by that deep emotional and spiritual form of religious expression known as Pietism,<sup>104</sup> which had challenged Lutheran and Calvinist orthodoxy and had identified scripture as the only guide to spiritual life.

The main objective of the critics of the German Enlightenment was the same as that of the English Unitarians, and that was to rescue religion rather than see it destroyed by deism and rationalism. The Unitarians sought to achieve this, however, by attacking orthodoxy and recovering and establishing a contrastingly pure form of Christianity uncorrupted by irrational dogma. In contrast the German writers used historical criticism as a tool for harmonisation, one that might resolve the conflicts between Pietism, orthodoxy and rationalism.<sup>105</sup> In accordance with Enlightenment values, both of these objectives were grounded to varying degrees in reason, and, as Quentin Skinner observes, the complex question of what constitutes a rational approach depends very much on the nature of other beliefs in a specific context.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the underlying differences in the form of Christianity in which they believed, radical Unitarian scholars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were clearly anxious to absorb the work of the German critics. In a letter to John Kenrick in 1819, the year in which Kenrick travelled to Germany to study at Göttingen and Berlin, Thomas Belsham wrote, 'I love the critical, and I abhor the theological works of the German writers.'<sup>107</sup> This short quotation

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<sup>104</sup> See Peter Erb (ed.), *Pietists, Selected Writings* (New York, 1983) for a description of the movement and a selection of writings from its most famous followers.

<sup>105</sup> Reill, *German Enlightenment*, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 4-5.

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Belsham to John Kenrick, 1819, in John Williams, *Memoirs of the Late Reverend Thomas Belsham, including a Brief Notice of his Published Works, and Copious Extracts from his Diary, Together*

epitomised the extent and nature of the gulf between a historical method which united the two sets of scholars and the many theological points on which they were divided. In this letter Belsham's primary concern about the new German rationalist theology was the fact that many of its exponents were 'anti-supernaturalists' who denied the existence of miracles. Belsham wrote angrily that to deny the miracles of Christ was to 'deny his divine mission, which is itself a miracle'.<sup>108</sup>

The reasons for the interest of Belsham and many other Unitarians in the German approach to biblical interpretation are clear. There had already been established links between German and Unitarian writers earlier in the eighteenth century in relation to the historical methodology which had appeared in the work of Nathaniel Lardner. In general terms the two sets of scholars had common method and similar objectives. The idea was to dissect the ancient Hebrew and New Testament texts, the latter which, by the time of Griesbach, was perceived as a historical document.<sup>109</sup> The scriptures were no longer exclusively the word of God, but manuscripts which should be treated as any other ancient texts. The objective was to discover more about the origins of the Hebrew nation and the real truth about the beginnings of the Christian faith.

It was also the case that in the wake of Joseph Priestley those radical Unitarian critics who, like him, had rejected orthodox doctrines, found that in

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*With Letters to and from his Correspondents* (London, 1833), p. 703. See also Alexander Gordon, *Addresses Biographical and Historical* (London 1922), p. 340.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> See Sheehan, *Enlightenment Bible*, p. 116. It was Griesbach, Sheehan argues, who brought the New Testament into the frame of historical investigation and by doing so became the most important textual scholar in Enlightenment Germany.

many rationalist German thinkers there was, as in themselves, an antipathy towards the blind acceptance of dogma and instead, a preference for the freedom of historical inquiry in scriptural interpretation.<sup>110</sup> These German critics in whom the Unitarians were interested were called 'Neologists' because of their radical and non-traditional approach to the Bible. They used history to penetrate biblical texts and developed both internal and external forms of criticism to evaluate historically the meaning of dogma, discarding that which was to them irrational or morally indefensible.<sup>111</sup> Thus in the historical method and its objectives, Unitarians and Germans had much in common.

In general terms Unitarians were fairly pragmatic about their use of the work of German biblical critics. The radical English scholars unashamedly 'cherry picked' certain aspects of German thought and belief to gather evidence which would support their own controversial theological ideas, a practice which sometimes produced unintended results. Following the German historical practice, in his work *Corruptions of Christianity* Joseph Priestley drew on the work of Mosheim,<sup>112</sup> the German ecclesiastical historian who regarded the church as a creation of man which reflected, depending on time and circumstances, the different forms of his religious expression.<sup>113</sup>

Although this essentially was very similar to the theme of Priestley's *Corruptions*, the perspective was quite different. Priestley did not dwell upon the idea of religious forms developing within historical contexts as such and neither

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<sup>110</sup> A. O. Dyson, 'Theological Legacies of the Enlightenment: England and Germany', in S. W. Sykes (ed.), *England and Germany. Studies in Theological Diplomacy* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), p. 55.

<sup>111</sup> Howard, *Theological Origins*, p. 35.

<sup>112</sup> See above.

<sup>113</sup> A. O. Dyson, 'Theological Legacies' p. 57.



did he relate context to doctrine in any sympathetic or understanding way. Rather, he made use of Mosheim's concept to help him illustrate his own contention that at various points in time and in certain circumstances in the history of the church there had been the development of false, evil and irrational doctrines which had corrupted and obscured the origins of the true, simple Christian faith.<sup>114</sup>

In his zeal, however, to outline the development of the corruptions of Christianity over the centuries Priestley in fact had adopted some of Mosheim's historical frame of mind. Mosheim was a German ecclesiastical historian who belonged to an Aufklärung in which a particular approach to the interpretation of the Bible was a factor in the development of a new historical consciousness.<sup>115</sup> Mosheim wrote, for example, that it was necessary to 'connect events with circumstances, views, principles and instruments which have contributed to their existence'.<sup>116</sup> Arguably, it was the use of aspects of Mosheim's method by

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<sup>114</sup> See, for example, Priestley, *Corruptions*, pp. 200-201. Priestley cites the case of an early sixteenth century Dominican friar named Tetzel, the famous target of Luther's anger, who sold the infamous indulgences in exchange for absolution. Priestley quotes Mosheim, who wrote that Tetzel's boast was that 'if a man had even lain with the mother of God, he was able, with the Pope's power, to pardon the crime'. Mosheim had recorded that Tetzel had even said that 'he had saved more souls from hell by these indulgences, than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching'. In the six pages before this, however, Priestley examines in detail the development of the practices of penance and how it came to be that forgiveness of sin became a marketable commodity. In order to establish the justification for their removal from what he considered to be a corrupt Christianity, Priestley wanted to show his readers how such practices had accrued around doctrines, and consequently employed Mosheim's method of examining how doctrine arose from time and circumstance. See *Corruptions*, pp. 195-200.

<sup>115</sup> See Reill, *German Enlightenment*.

<sup>116</sup> Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History Ancient and Modern: From the Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century in which the Rise, Progress and Variations of Church Power are Considered in the Connection with the State of Learning and Philosophy and the Political History of Europe during that Period*, trans. Archibald MacLaine, 6 vols (London, 1819), vol. 1, pp. 7-8, quoted by Reill, *German Enlightenment*, p. 102. Reill notes that this work, finished just before Mosheim's death in 1755, appeared in Latin in 1755, 1783 and 1801, in German in 1769, 1773 and 1770-1796 and in French in 1776. It was the English version, however, which attained the greatest success, and between 1765 and 1825 MacLaine's translation went through seven editions. In addition, two American editions were published before 1800. See Reill, *German Enlightenment*, p. 204, note 4.

Priestley which in some ways made Priestley's theological history far more historical in nature than his guidelines to secular history.<sup>117</sup>

With regard, however, to the influence of German ideas on English scholars it ought to be remembered that simply because forms of thought happen to be received in one country from another it does not necessarily follow that these ideas are certain to be understood or diffused in the same way in the recipient country as they were in the country from which they emerged.<sup>118</sup> In the case of Priestley the historical nature of *Corruptions* was never appreciated as such either by contemporaries or later thinkers.<sup>119</sup> The entire purpose of the work was to identify false doctrines and elevate the idea of a pristine, primitive, Unitarian Christianity and everything else which characterised the work was subsumed to that end.

This relentless search for the origins of an untainted form of Christianity meant that Unitarians were drawn easily into that branch of German historical criticism which determined the authorship, validity and sources of New Testament texts. This was why the work of J.J. Griesbach,<sup>120</sup> for example, proved so attractive to radical English critics. According to James Martineau<sup>121</sup> it was John Kenrick, then aged nineteen, who reviewed Griesbach's work on the New Testament in an article in three parts in the *Monthly Repository* during 1807.

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<sup>117</sup> See chapter three, above.

<sup>118</sup> Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> That was until 1980, when Margaret Canovan pursued the argument in favour of Priestley's historical sense in *Corruptions*. See Margaret Canovan, 'The Irony of History: Priestley's Rational Theology, *PPN*, no. 4, 1980, pp. 16-25.

<sup>120</sup> See note 49, above.

<sup>121</sup> James Martineau, *In Memoriam, John Kenrick* (1877), p. 39.

<sup>122</sup> The youthful scholar carefully outlined Griesbach's method in his analysis of the variations in texts,<sup>123</sup> and his conclusion commended the German's scholarship and insight in producing a useful work which would assist those who 'investigate the legitimate interpretation of the genuine text of scripture'.<sup>124</sup>

In describing a textual problem related to a verse of Colossians, which was cited as having fourteen variations, Kenrick summed up in one short phrase the significance of the German's work to himself when he wrote that, 'as Griesbach has arranged them [the variations], they exhibit a complete genealogy of the corruption'.<sup>125</sup> As Mosheim's ideas appealed to Priestley, so Griesbach's ability to trace the development of textual corruption had a similar attraction for Kenrick whose frame of mind, like his predecessor's, was concerned with the removal of false accretions to expose a primitive nucleus of untainted Christian truth.

Kenrick reiterates Unitarian themes in another four major contributions in the *Repository* which were each related to German thinkers. The first of these, published in 1808, featured a short translation of work of Ludwig Timothy Spittler.<sup>126</sup> Clearly it had been selected by Kenrick because it agreed with the Unitarian idea of a primitive golden age of Christianity in which the 'great fundamental truths of the unity ... of God' appeared before the degeneration process began.

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<sup>122</sup> John Kenrick, Review of *Novum Testamentum Græce. Textum, ad Fidem Codicum, Verionum & Patrum recensuit, & lectionis varietatem adjecit*, D. Jo. Jac. Griesbach, Vol ii, Ed. 2 da. Halæ, 1806. Londini apud Payne et Mackinlay. 1807. See Part 1: *MR*, vol. 2, March 1807, pp. 151-156, Part 2: vol. 2, April 1807, pp. 209-213 and Part 3: vol. 2, May 1807, pp. 266-270.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 152-156 and 209-213.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>126</sup> See chapter three, above, note 146.

<sup>127</sup> The second, featured prominently in the previous month, was a biographical article by Kenrick on the life and work of Griesbach. <sup>128</sup> Francis Mineka recorded that it had been John Kentish who had written this piece. <sup>129</sup> He was wrong, however, for it was most certainly the work of the young Kenrick, written and published before his twentieth birthday.

There are two good reasons to believe this, the first being that James Martineau also lists this as attributable to Kenrick. <sup>130</sup> The second reason is that this article is signed with the initial 'K', which Kenrick used to identify all his other subsequent articles, while John Kentish's contributions are invariably signed with the letter 'N'. There is, furthermore, no reason why the young Kenrick was not very capable of writing at such a high level of scholarship. According to Professor John Young, whose private Greek classes Kenrick attended at Glasgow College from 1807 to 1810, the young student was 'in thinking already a man and in language as far advanced as those who write for the world'. <sup>131</sup>

In the 1808 article, Kenrick wrote that Griesbach's discovery of three different sets of Greek manuscripts <sup>132</sup> showed the critic that his own way forward was not to strike a balance between the manuscripts, 'proclaiming that genuine

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<sup>127</sup> John Kenrick, 'Extract from Professor Spiltner's "Elements of Ecclesiastical History"', *MR*, vol. 3, February 1808, pp. 72-74, esp. p. 73. For 'Spiltner' substitute 'Spittler'. The journal appears to have misspelled the German professor's name.

<sup>128</sup> John Kenrick, 'Sketch of the Life, and Notices of the Writings, of Dr. John James Griesbach', *MR*, vol. 3, January 1808, pp. 1-9.

<sup>129</sup> Mineka, *Dissidence of Dissent*, p. 133.

<sup>130</sup> Martineau, *In Memoriam, John Kenrick* (1877), p. 39.

<sup>131</sup> Letter of testimonial from Professor John Young at Glasgow College to Lant Carpenter, in May 1810, UCL, Sharpe Papers 198. Professor Young, an eminent classics scholar, was Professor of Greek at Glasgow from 1774 to 1821. See chapter five, below.

<sup>132</sup> According to Kenrick, Griesbach found that as early as the third century there existed two editions of the New Testament text, one which he called the Alexandrine, which may be found in the quotations of Origen and another the Western edition, in those of Tertullian and Cyprian. From a combination of these two, and, wrote Kenrick, 'the errors and variations which necessarily arise in a long series of transcriptions', there came a third version, the Byzantine. Quoted from 'Life and Writings of Griesbach', p. 5.

which has the majority'.<sup>133</sup> Instead, it was to read closely the various manuscripts to ascertain how far they were genuine, for if two or three turned out to be *independent* testimonies, then they 'outweigh a hundred, who repeat the reading from each other or from some common authority'.<sup>134</sup> This is the same approach which Kenrick took later to the appreciation of Mark's gospel as nearer to the 'springhead' of truth than the others, because it was truly historical in its telling.

The third article was a two part biographical sketch of J.D. Michaelis, published early in 1811.<sup>135</sup> The second part of this was largely given over to long quotations from a memoir written by Eichhorn about Michaelis.<sup>136</sup> In the first part, however, Kenrick noted that Michaelis' work on the Mosaic laws, published in 1770, was the volume regarded by his countrymen as his most original and valuable. Michaelis' knowledge was extensive about eastern manners and ideas 'as necessary to explain the views of the Jewish lawgiver, and enable us to calculate the effect of his institutions'.<sup>137</sup> The final article written by Kenrick was a study of J.S. Semler,<sup>138</sup> giving another insight into why German criticism was so attractive to Unitarians. In this biographical contribution Kenrick described the German's work as 'A rich profusion of new and ingenious

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<sup>133</sup> Kenrick, 'Life and Writings of Griesbach', p. 5.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> John Kenrick, 'Sketch of the Life, Writings and Character of John David Michaelis, Professor of Philosophy at Göttingen,' Part One: *MR*, vol. 6, January 1811, pp. 1-8 and Part Two, *MR*, vol. 6, February 1811, pp. 65-71.

<sup>136</sup> See *MR*, vol. 6, February 1811, pp. 65-69. For the memoir in full, see Eichhorn, *John David Michaelis*.

<sup>137</sup> Kenrick, 'Sketch of Michaelis', Part One, p. 6.

<sup>138</sup> John Kenrick, 'Biographical Sketch of J.S. Semler', Part One: *MR*, vol. 16, February 1821, pp. 65-72, Part Two: *MR*, vol. 16, March 1821, pp. 135-141.

thoughts', <sup>139</sup> in which Semler had shown 'those texts to be spurious which are commonly deemed pillars of orthodoxy'. <sup>140</sup>

Thus, from some key points which were made by Kenrick in these four articles published in the period 1807-1821, <sup>141</sup> it is apparent that he had a close affinity very early in his life with important German ideas which concurred with his own Unitarian opinions. He seized, for example, upon Spittler's idea of a golden age which degenerated into a later period of corruption and false dogma, a notion which conformed with the Unitarian belief in the existence of a pure and primitive faith which had subsequently degenerated. He recognised in Griesbach the importance of a scholarly historical search for genuine texts to prove the truth about early Christianity. The true reading had to be the one which was independent and closest of all to the events, rather than a composite of majority opinions about the validity of texts. In Michaelis he saw the historical value of his perspective on the Mosaic laws and in Semler, he praised the German's findings, which flew in the face of orthodox opinion.

As to why Kenrick should write such favourable accounts of these key tenets of German criticism, the answer is simple. He and other Unitarians were enthusiastic about German ideas in this field fundamentally because they agreed with not only the historical method the Germans used to prove their rational case, but also with the historical tone of their conclusions. It was not the case that the

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 139

<sup>141</sup> At the time of the publication of these four articles, in 1807, 1808, 1811 and 1821, John Kenrick was aged respectively nineteen, twenty, twenty three and thirty three and consequently they may be regarded as productions of the earlier period of his life during which the emphasis of his work was the understanding of biblical criticism.

Unitarian scholarly elite was suddenly flooded with original ideas about historical criticism from the German speaking world by which the English radicals were strongly influenced and changed in their opinions. A great deal about the method and many of the conclusions about fundamental issues of the two sets of scholars were similar. They both followed the historical approach to biblical events and to the validity and meaning of texts, both rejected false dogma, the rigidity of orthodox opinion and belief in verbal inspiration. It was the fact there had been a mutual recognition of similar views, already entrenched in a tradition of exchange earlier in the eighteenth century, which drew later radical Unitarians to a closer study of German criticism.

In addition, both sets of thinkers were in a transitional situation as self-appointed champions of a more rational form of religious faith. This was a set of beliefs which in general terms reacted against the doctrines of Calvinism or Lutheranism<sup>142</sup> and one which was discoverable by a historical approach to scripture. This meant that the intellectual frames of mind of Germans and Unitarians may be compared in two other important respects which reveal some differences. In both there was a need to find a theological compromise which accommodated simultaneously the results of the new historical and contextual nature of their researches and the universality and timelessness of their religion. Secondly, because in both cases their rational inquiries had undermined much

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<sup>142</sup> See Reill, *German Enlightenment*, p. 43. Reill's view is that it was the Pietism which formed the religious background of most of the German Enlightenment thinkers, including the Neologists, who challenged the accepted assumptions of Lutheranism and Calvinism. See page 6 of Reill's work. As we are already aware, it was the irrational tenets of Calvinism against which the Unitarians rebelled. However, for an account of Priestley's reinterpretation of religious belief, see James T. Hoecker, 'Joseph Priestley and the Reification of Religion', *PPN*, No. 2, 1978, pp. 44-75.

about the foundations of Christian belief, it was very difficult for them to reconcile fully the results of those inquiries with their own fundamental beliefs.

On the first issue here there was little that could be reconciled in the thought of Joseph Priestley. He had outlined with great clarity the idea of a 'primitive nucleus'<sup>143</sup> which had been corrupted by the accretions of false doctrine over time. However relevant and important was this core idea of a pure, untainted form of Christianity applicable to all ages, it collided in conceptual terms with the notion that in order to prove its timeless validity, the scholar should make use of the historical method, which, of course, emphasised the value of the contextual rather than the universal. The truths of the pure Christian religion were, for Priestley, immutable and applicable to all ages. It had been that false dogma which had arisen over time which obscured the pristine origins and nature of this form of belief. Priestley had used history to justify the removal of the doctrines in order to validate the true religion which in turn was universal and trans-historical, and consequently there arose within the Unitarian intellectual position a rather stubborn conceptual problem.

The Unitarians were not aware of this contradiction which arose from their historical approach to religious thought. The Germans, however, were acutely conscious of the problem. For Semler, as for the other Neologists such as Mosheim and Michaelis, dogma was historical and had no universal validity. It was a contextual formation of temporal religious belief which satisfied man's need at any specific time. Albeit from a different perspective, the German Neologists had done exactly what Joseph Priestley had achieved in his key text

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<sup>143</sup> Alexander Gordon, *Heads of Unitarian History* (London, 1895), p. 120.



*Corruptions*. Like Priestley, they had historicised dogma, defining it as a transitory human creation which was far removed from a timeless faith applicable to all ages. There was a great difference between this kind of temporary 'local' doctrinal formation and man's feeling for a timeless moral religion.<sup>144</sup>

Semler, however, found a solution to this. His idea was to differentiate between *religion*, which was the personal spiritual understanding in each individual, and *theology*, which represented the organisation, ritual and dogma of each age. For Semler, there was no immutable, perfect religion applicable to every time and place. Religion was progressive and had to expand with man's own consciousness and should respond to the spiritual needs of the particular circumstances and culture of each age.<sup>145</sup> The Christian religion could be fully understood only within the historical context, in which could be discovered the ideas of those who were contemporaries of Jesus and His Apostles.<sup>146</sup>

The Unitarians, whose investigations of scripture came as close as was possible to the events which surrounded the life of Christ, believed this also. Joseph Priestley was sure that the perfect form of Christianity which would be revealed by such investigations would become apparent to mankind in a universal sense, as man himself progressed along a unilinear and uniform route towards moral perfection. For Semler, however, the development of religion, which was of the eternal, towards a goal of perfection became in his eyes based upon an interaction between the spiritual, in other words man's religious consciousness, and form, the dogmatic, in any given historical context. This

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<sup>144</sup> Reill, *German Enlightenment*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>145</sup> See Reill, *German Enlightenment*, p. 166.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

interplay of the eternal and the contextual would result in the triumph of that which was spiritual, and consequently there would come about the creation of a wider religious consciousness age by age.<sup>147</sup> There were, therefore, two different configurations here. That of the Unitarians perceived the historical and contextual as no more than a tool employed to reveal a perfect, timeless and universal Christianity. The other, the German idea, saw the historical as an intrinsic *part* of the process whereby the attainment of such a perfect faith would be finally achieved.

This persistent problem of how to reconcile the historical and contextual with the general and universal was also a fundamental concern in the thought of Lessing, who did not believe that historical evidence could ever be proof of necessary truths, which were of a higher order and founded upon reason.<sup>148</sup> His conviction was that all truth about God, because it was eternal and universal could never depend upon history alone for its justification.<sup>149</sup> Lessing's solution to the problem of how the philosopher or theologian brought together elements of these two worlds, the empirical of the historical and the necessary of the rational, or in the case of the theological, the biblical-historical and revelation itself, was the idea of an interactive process which resulted in a progressive momentum in history and in religion.<sup>150</sup> Lessing's concept of an interactive

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Henry Chadwick (ed.), *Lessing's Theological Writings* (London, 1956), p. 30.

<sup>149</sup> Leonard P. Wessel, *G.E. Lessing's Theology, A Reinterpretation : A Study in the Problematic Nature of the Enlightenment* (The Hague, 1977), p. 19.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., pp. 163-169. According to Wessel, Lessing's idea of how to reconcile the empirico-historical with the essence and metaphysics of rationality, implied a teleological concept of progressive change. Each temporal element of existence and its order of occurrence had to be measured with regard to its content in terms of *necessary* steps in the realisation of the rationality of the totality. Consequently, necessity and rationality came within a framework of evolutionary and progressive change. See pp. 167-168.

process involved an absorption into the eternal of elements of the temporal. Like Semler, Lessing favoured the concept of a gradually expanding theological consciousness and the idea of a progressive religion. Thus although there were many areas in which Unitarians and Germans agreed upon both method and objectives, this was one in which there were two fundamentally contrasting concepts of the relationship between the temporal and the universal.

John Kenrick was familiar with Semler's works. They were to him, however, disorganised and little read, and his style 'uncouth'. Kenrick wrote that 'we look in vain for even a single work so elaborate and perfect as the reputation of the author might lead us to expect'.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, he clearly believed in Semler's merit as an original thinker and noted that he was 'the first among the Germans who perceived ...the importance of interpreting [Scripture] historically'.<sup>152</sup> On this theme, Kenrick selected Semler's work on ecclesiastical history, for which Semler had studied original manuscripts, for further comment. He noted that instead of using his researches as polemical weapons to defend Lutheran doctrines, as was the usual practice of his predecessors, Semler 'investigated in them the origin of those doctrines which had since been stamped with the character of orthodoxy'.<sup>153</sup> In other words, Semler had followed the same method as Joseph Priestley, and that was to define the origin and development of the doctrines.

While for Priestley such doctrines were corruptions, for Semler, whose exegesis had explained the phraseology from which 'popular doctrines are

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<sup>151</sup> Kenrick, 'Sketch of J.S. Semler', p. 135.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

deduced', <sup>154</sup> they represented the dogma which was the form, or outward manifestation, of the religious consciousness of each age. From the comment which followed, it is easy to see why Kenrick showed such a keen interest in Semler's conclusions. Kenrick made the point that Semler had showed that in one age doctrines which had been received as 'unsuspicious truth' had, in another, been 'anathematized as heresy'. <sup>155</sup> Consequently, wrote Kenrick, Semler had drawn upon an argument for the revival of 'that freedom of judgement on doctrinal matters which had been enjoyed in earlier ages'. <sup>156</sup> In order to illustrate his point, Semler had exposed the 'miserable criticism' used by Augustine to extract the doctrine of original sin from the Latin text. <sup>157</sup>

This was a compelling argument about the transitory, historical and contextual nature of dogma, or as they were to Semler, religious 'forms' and it was one which Kenrick would find attractive. He, like most Unitarians, had been convinced that the radical theological arguments of his creed, unlike the precepts of irrational and outdated doctrines, were in perfect harmony with a more rational age in history which was differentiated in terms of intellectual progress from the past. These sentiments appeared in their most clearly defined form in Kenrick's early discourses and sermons. In 1821, the year that saw the publication of his article on Semler, Kenrick wrote that the crucial characteristics of this rational age were the principles of free inquiry and open-mindedness, the culmination of the ascent from barbarism and superstition to civilisation, knowledge 'sublime

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

philosophy and pure religion'.<sup>158</sup> The hope was that the radical beliefs and rational inquiries of Unitarianism would usher in a new religious sentiment which would concur with the intellectually more sophisticated period in which they lived.

Before, however, opinion may be called truly rational, the rules of evidence and probability ought to be assessed, testimonies had to be compared and ancient languages, manners and customs should be studied. The influence of education and circumstances upon the writers of scripture, on their modes of thought and turns of expression should be taken into account. In order to attain a complete view of the progress of religion, 'spiritual things must be compared with spiritual', and the whole series of divine dispensations, from the earliest to the latest page of Revelation 'be viewed in the connexion of all their parts'.<sup>159</sup> This wide historical picture of religious flux and change, which in its use of language is startlingly reminiscent of Priestley's doctrine of necessity, would, he believed, prove to the world the errors of the past.

Six years later, preaching to the supporters of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1827,<sup>160</sup> he said that Unitarians should fix their attention upon 'those gradual and therefore sure revolutions in sentiment, which remove ancient prejudices, or prepare the way for their removal'.<sup>161</sup> Religious opinion in England was closely integrated with the selfish interests inherent in the political and religious institutions of the country. The best hope was the idea of a

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<sup>158</sup> John Kenrick, *The Temper and Manner in Which Inquiry into the Doctrines of Religion Should be Conducted. A Discourse delivered at Halifax, May 9, 1821 before the Association of Presbyterian Ministers of the West riding of Yorkshire and the West Riding Tract Society* (London, 1821), p. 5.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>160</sup> John Kenrick, *Obstacles to the Diffusion of Unitarianism and the Prospect of Their Removal* (London, 1827)

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

'progressive religion' [which] must receive modifications from the intellectual state of the world'.<sup>162</sup> The intellectual activity of the present day, by which he meant the removal of irrational doctrine from the Christian faith, could not continue without producing an effect upon religion. Thus his theme was change and the hope that with increased attention to historical criticism which 'from the example of neighbouring nations,<sup>163</sup> appears to be communicating itself to our own' would advance the Unitarian cause.<sup>164</sup>

A later sermon in 1835, given on the Sunday after a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, continued this theme of the expansion of religious consciousness in tandem with the state of man's rational intellectual improvement. We should, he said, thank God for our intellectual faculties and should unite religious sentiments with their cultivation.<sup>165</sup> He builds on this to present a clear statement of belief in the compatibility of reason and faith with a rejection of the notion that 'ignorance is the mother of devotion'. We should, he wrote, allow the culture of our religious feelings and beliefs to 'go hand in hand with the culture of the understanding, the memory and the taste'.<sup>166</sup> How hard this would have been to achieve had we lived in an age and country where the attempt to improve our minds 'would have drawn on us the hostility of those who prospered by the monopoly of knowledge'.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> In particular, of course, the German states.

<sup>164</sup> Kenrick, 'Obstacles', p. 29.

<sup>165</sup> John Kenrick, *The Union of Religion with Intellectual Culture, A Sermon delivered at the Presbyterian Chapel, Eustace Street, Dublin, August 16, 1835; Being the Sunday after the Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London, 1835), p. 7.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

There are clear linkages here between the state of religious consciousness and variable cultural and intellectual circumstances. The idea of a religion which progressed age by age was undoubtedly present in his thought. However, this advancement in religion was bound together with intellectual development, and the state of religion in each age was dependent on the degree of rationality which had been achieved. For Germans such as Semler it was the *spiritual* which was the moving force in history. The triumph of the spiritual consciousness over the dogma of each historical age impelled the establishment of a purer, more rational faith. Although the elements of reason, spirit and doctrine were differently configured in their actions in history, the idea of a progressive religion was common to both Kenrick and the Germans. However, at this point in his intellectual life Kenrick, who had been schooled in the empiricism of the English Enlightenment was certain that *reason* was the dominant factor. The Germans, whose background was Pietism, put their confidence in the *spiritual* as the force of religious change, and it was this which directed them more readily towards the Romantic Age. Despite his reliance upon the power of reason, however, there was nevertheless a tendency in Kenrick's thought to view religion, as opposed to dogma, as time-bound to some extent, for in his mind it seemed to be a progressive force age to age. It would, therefore, be reasonable to argue that Kenrick was in a transitional position between English and German thought with regard to the contextual nature of religion.

Common to Germans and Unitarians was that they were situated, in terms of the nature of their own beliefs, between orthodoxy and the new, rational faith

underpinned by their historical criticism. In the approach to textual analysis both sets of scholars, acting on the principles of free and objective inquiry, had challenged key tenets of Lutheran and Calvinist orthodoxy. Because, however, these scholars found themselves in new, uncharted and challenging intellectual and theological circumstances, it was inevitable therefore that they would find it hard to discard old certainties and this in turn produced contradictions in their own religious faith.

John Kenrick pointed out that it was certainly true that despite 'expunging from the New Testament every passage on which the shadow of an argument for the Trinity could be maintained', Griesbach nevertheless remained a Trinitarian, and 'so may it have been with Semler'.<sup>168</sup> Although Kenrick may have been correct in his opinion that Semler's personal beliefs were fundamentally orthodox, there is little doubt that the German's rejection of the doctrine of inspiration in the 1770s had been of great importance. It had weakened the idea that the Bible in its entirety was the word of God, and had replaced it with the claim that each book had to be considered within its own historical context. Thus there was no such thing as divine verbal inspiration, and consequently the whole source of religious meaning lay in human, rather than divine hands.<sup>169</sup>

It was by necessity, however, that Semler's theological position remained somewhat ambiguous in the public arena,<sup>170</sup> and consequently it was difficult to work out the exact nature of his beliefs. However, Kenrick did make the point that although Semler had shown that the canon of scripture was a collection of

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<sup>168</sup> Kenrick, 'Sketch of Semler', p. 72.

<sup>169</sup> Frei, *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>170</sup> Kenrick, 'Sketch of Semler', p. 139.



Jewish national literature rather than one of inspired books, the German nevertheless appeared ambiguous about the nature of inspiration itself. Semler had argued that the proof of inspiration must, in all cases, be subjective, meaning that the individual felt that a particular portion of scripture produced spiritual perfection. Kenrick believed, however, that the very same portion of scripture might be the word of God to one and not another, or even might have been proved to be a forgery. His conclusion was that this had been an attempt on Semler's part to retain a term in the theological system 'which could not conveniently be banished from it, without connecting any intelligible idea with it'.<sup>171</sup>

This rather ambiguous position in which Semler and others found themselves was mirrored in more general terms by the theological perspectives of Unitarians. The latter had embraced a rational faith founded upon a rigorous analysis of scripture, believed in the simple humanity of Christ and had rejected many tenets of orthodoxy which they found irrational. Nevertheless, they retained their faith in miracles and regarded as contrary to their beliefs any trace of the anti-supernaturalism which had been advocated by many German scholars. A belief in Christ's miracles, however, appeared to contradict their uncompromising reliance upon biblical interpretation founded upon reason, which in turn detracted from their argument in favour of a belief in revelation. Mineka is entirely correct to see their beliefs as a rather confused 'half way house' between Deism and orthodoxy.<sup>172</sup> Thus Germans and Unitarians had in common a transitional

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>172</sup> Mineka, *Dissidence of Dissent*, p. 21.

theological position which gave rise to contradictions in their own religious opinions.

Unitarian scholars were loyal to their German counterparts. The Unitarians' radical, controversial, rather curious and inconsistent beliefs, along with their propensity for carefully selecting those texts which would support them, all contributed to the fact that in the early decades of the nineteenth century they were 'a sect everywhere spoken against'.<sup>173</sup> In order to counter this, a spirited defence of Unitarianism was a regular feature of the content in the *Monthly Repository*. One theme of these controversies in the columns of the journal was the Anglican accusation that the Unitarians used the method and evidence produced by German scholars, who were often Trinitarians themselves, to support their own radical beliefs. Conversely, the Unitarians argued that such historical evidence must be strong indeed if it undermined the very doctrines believed in by many of the German critics. Both Unitarians and Germans, both of whom were at the forefront of biblical criticism, regularly came under attack from leading Anglicans such as Richard Laurence and Hugh James Rose (1795-1838).<sup>174</sup> The Germans were often reviled for their rationalism, and the Unitarians for virtually everything else apart from that. The Germans also suffered the wrath of English orthodoxy simply because of their popularity with radical Dissent, for from the Anglican perspective the view of Unitarians, Germans and the commonality of their opinions in many, if not all respects, was one of guilt by association.

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-25, quoted at p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> See below.

The Unitarians, however, were quick to respond to all this. One example of their staunch defence of German scholarship was an article in 1817 in which the reviewer berates the author, the Anglican critic Richard Laurence,<sup>175</sup> whose judgement of the work of Griesbach, he claimed, had been distorted by the fact that the German had been highly rated by Unitarians. The reviewer wrote that 'even Griesbach must be slightly and coldly praised, in order that Dr. Laurence may hasten to calumniate and insult "the Unitarians"'.<sup>176</sup> There were times when the tone of such reviews could become aggressive and surprisingly sarcastic. The reviewer rounded off his last article with a stinging comment which read, 'Dr. Laurence may have succeeded in winnowing some chaff from the wheat: let him take the chaff for his pains'.<sup>177</sup>

By these early-nineteenth-century decades John Kenrick had become the leading classical and German scholar of his denomination. He was a powerful intellect and no stranger to the defence of radical theology against Anglican attacks. These attacks, often launched within the framework of the scholarly relationship between Unitarians and Germans with regard to historical criticism, were countered in the same vein. In 1821, Richard Laurence, who by now had become Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, translated into English the manuscript of the mysterious Book of Enoch, which had been discovered in an Abyssinian church, and a copy of which was subsequently deposited in the Bodleian

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<sup>175</sup> Review article of Richard Laurence, *Remarks Upon the Systematical Classification of Manuscripts Adopted by Griesbach in his Edition of the Greek Testament* (Oxford, 1814), *MR*, vol. 12, March 1817, pp. 167-172, April 1817, pp. 236-241 and May 1817, 359-364. At the time, Laurence was Rector of Marsham and of Stone in the county of Kent. He later became Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*,

Library.<sup>178</sup> Laurence's commentary granted the manuscript and its prophetic contents a degree of truth. He then took the opportunity to point out that in the Book of Enoch clear allusions had been made to a being highly exalted in heaven who was called 'the Son of Man, the Elect One, the Messiah, and the Son of God'.<sup>179</sup> Laurence asserted that this added weight to the argument in favour of the pre-existence of Christ and therefore contradicted Unitarian belief that no Jew in any age 'ever held the opinion of his pre-existence'. Jewish doctrine on this point, wrote Laurence, was 'totally different from that which the Unitarians assert it to have been'.<sup>180</sup>

Kenrick replied with a series of arguments against the idea of pre-existence, then finished his review with some well-aimed comments which most certainly would have wounded his opponent. 'We rejoice to perceive', wrote Kenrick, 'that the celebrated oriental scholar, Gesenius of Halle, (not *Gessenius*, as Dr L. calls him) is about to published a Latin translation of this book.'<sup>181</sup> From Gesenius, wrote Kenrick, we shall receive the Book of Enoch 'in a more satisfactory form'. Kenrick added that although Laurence had taken great pains, something more accurate was required, for it had been observed that he [Laurence] wrote his mother tongue 'with great carelessness'.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Review article by John Kenrick of Richard Laurence, *The Book of Enoch the Prophet, now first Translated from an Ethiopic MS. In the Bodeleian Library* (Oxford, 1821), *MR*, vol. 16, July 1821, pp. 411-415.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 413-414.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 415. The critic mentioned here by Kenrick was the rationalist Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius (1786-1842). A highly acclaimed Hebrew scholar, Gesenius became Professor of Theology at Halle in 1811. He challenged both the historical integrity of the books of Chronicles and the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 415.

Only seven months later, Kenrick was involved in a battle of words with another Anglican cleric, Thomas Burgess (1756-1837), the Hebrew scholar who was made Bishop of St David's in 1803. This was the bishopric which had been occupied previously by Samuel Horsley (1733-1806), the Anglican theologian whose assaults on Joseph Priestley's *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* ignited a controversy with Priestley which last for six years during the 1780's. Kenrick reviewed a work by Burgess<sup>183</sup> which had disagreed with both Griesbach and the Unitarians about the validity of 1 John verse 7, a text which suggested the witness of Christ's pre-existence. Burgess argued that the Unitarians had absorbed unquestioningly the ideas of the Trinitarian Griesbach whose 'single authority is sufficient for [them] mutilating the received text of the New Testament'<sup>184</sup> Kenrick's reply to all this was characteristically biting. He charged Burgess with employing 'feeble sophistry' in his 'forlorn hope in defence of orthodoxy' and of being prone to the 'prejudices of the orthodox which make them attach more weight to a name than an argument'.<sup>185</sup>

Some years later, in 1827, the object of Kenrick's wrath was the Anglican theologian Hugh James Rose. In 1825 Rose had published a series of sermons he had preached at Cambridge on the 'state of the Protestant religion in Germany'.<sup>186</sup> His contention was that in Germany there were a number of critics whose treatment of biblical interpretation could be compared with that of 'the

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<sup>183</sup> John Kenrick, 'Bishop of St. David's on Three Witnesses' Text', review article of *A Vindication of 1 John v.7, from the Objections of M. Griesbach, in which is given a New View of the External Evidence, with Greek Authorities for the Authenticity of the Verse not hitherto adduced in its Defence*. By the Bishop of St. David's, *MR*, vol. 17, January 1822, pp. 39-47.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 47.

<sup>186</sup> Hugh James Rose, *The State of the Protestant Religion in Germany* (Cambridge, 1825).

most violent English Unitarians'.<sup>187</sup> Rose singled out Semler for special criticism due to the German's rejection of inspiration and his historical interpretation of scripture, which included an assessment of the cast of mind of the New Testament writers before interpreting their writings. These key points of the rational, historical approach, of course, had been in some respects characteristic of Unitarian criticism for several decades before Rose's outbursts.<sup>188</sup>

Kenrick's review article<sup>189</sup> accused Rose of un scholarly bias by searching through German authors and picking out anything he thought rash or odious which would give him ammunition to attack their theology. Kenrick wrote that Rose's actions resembled those of

an attorney-general [who] reads the works of an  
obnoxious political writer, looking only for passages  
on which to ground his indictment.<sup>190</sup>

He censured Rose's distorted emphasis on the 'awful consequences in Germany'<sup>191</sup> of believing that theological truth is to be found by a blind confidence in the powers of human understanding. Next, he criticised the Anglican for misleading readers by classifying under the name of Rationalism 'all shades and degrees of departure from the orthodox standard'. This meant that the imputation that such opinions were only Deism in another form 'is artfully thrown on the whole body of

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<sup>187</sup> Rose, *ibid.*, p. 82, quoted by Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism*, p. 166.

<sup>188</sup> See chapter three above.

<sup>189</sup> John Kenrick, Review Article of *The State of the Protestant Religion in Germany, in a Series of Discourses, preached before the University of Cambridge*, by the Rev. Hugh James Rose, M.A. Cambridge and London. 1825, *MR*, New Series, vol. 1, January 1827, pp. 48-53.

<sup>190</sup> Kenrick, Review of *Protestant Religion in Germany*, p. 49.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

the interpreters of scripture'.<sup>192</sup> Finally, he attacked Rose for his rejection of the idea of theology as a 'progressive science' and for believing instead that the Church of England 'has established a creed for all future ages, in which no one should dream of making an improvement'.<sup>193</sup> It was extraordinary, wrote Kenrick, that Rose's reasoning accepted the idea that the sixteenth century preferred its own judgement to that of the fifteenth, but thought it was arrogant and presumptuous that the nineteenth century should 'claim the same advantage over the age of Luther and Cranmer'.<sup>194</sup>

The controversy between Anglicans on the one hand and the Unitarian-German alliance on the other was an exchange which often outlined more clearly the differences and similarities between the parties involved. For example, Rose's belief that the Anglican creed was immutable as one for all future ages was rejected firmly by German scholars such as Semler, who believed that dogma can have no universal validity. In this, they agreed with Unitarians, whose solution as regards dogma was to eliminate it. Kenrick's own notion of a progressive religion, however, conformed in some ways to the German concept of religious change over time.

Anglicans, whose Trinitarian beliefs were shared by many German scholars such as Griesbach, rejected that aspect of German scholarship known as rationalism which undermined belief in miracles and revelation, a belief which Anglicans shared with the Unitarians. There was much, obviously, that was not shared between the two English religious camps and Anglicans hated German

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

scholarship because it confirmed much about doctrine which concurred with the radical Unitarian beliefs they considered dangerous to the future of the English church.

In addition, Unitarians such as Kenrick criticised Anglican statements repeated by Rose that the English Church *also* laid claim to a set of beliefs based upon early, primitive Christianity. Anglican arguments on this point centred on the belief that 'Our church receives only what was received in those ages in which truth must have been known'.<sup>195</sup> Kenrick pointed out, of course, that it was incredible that Anglicans could possibly make this claim and nevertheless remain Trinitarians.

As to the Trinitarianism of some German scholars, Unitarians regarded it with less resentment. They believed that despite the fact that Germans held these views, they were still honest scholars and champions of free inquiry who investigated the Bible in a historical manner. They never held back the results of any research which happened to undermine their own beliefs, but presented it to the world in an unbiased way. With regard to English Trinitarian dogma, however, it only served as a barrier to Unitarian hopes for freedom of thought in religious matters. Anglicans supported false doctrines and tried to suppress any inquiry into the nature of their beliefs.

As to the Germans themselves, many of them were stung by English orthodox criticism of their work. In a much later, two-part review of a work by

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.



C.G.J. Bunsen (1791-1860) in 1853,<sup>196</sup> Kenrick lamented that Bunsen had been deeply hurt by the 'prejudiced and ignorant outcry which has been raised in England against German theology'.<sup>197</sup> The Anglican – Unitarian – German controversy was a two-way debate which took place over a period of many years in the nineteenth century. It emphasised the deep chasms with regard to theological opinion which divided Anglicans from radical scholars and it made clearer the common factors which brought together Unitarian and German scholarship in the period.

John Kenrick wrote many articles related to German criticism. Out of a total of just over eighty contributions, the bulk of which appeared in the *Monthly Repository, Christian Reformer and Prospective Review*, roughly forty one per cent were German – related. Of that forty one per cent, nineteen per cent were on the subject of biblical criticism while the remaining twenty two per cent covered subject matter related to history, philology and myth. Articles on the subject of biblical criticism were scattered throughout his productive life, while the latter three topics were more characteristic of his later intellectual career after his visit to Germany in 1819-1820.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> John Kenrick, 'Christianity in the Third Century', Review Article on *Hippolytus and his Age, or the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Rome under Commodus and Alexander Severus; and Ancient and Modern Christianity and Divinity compared*. By Christian Charles Josias Bunsen. Part One, *CR*, vol. 9, January 1853, pp.1-11. The second part of the article, entitled 'Bunsen's Hippolytus – Ancient and Modern Christianity', may be found in *CR*, vol. 9, February 1853, pp. 73-84.

Bunsen was a diplomat with close links to England as well as a biblical scholar and, as Rogerson points out, was an important critic in many respects. Bunsen emphasized the consciousness of God within mankind and his development, and in doing so took from Genesis the idea of an original human race before the Flood. Bunsen was also a keen scholar of ancient Egypt and its chronology and a close friend of the German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius (1810-1884). See Rogerson *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 121-129.

<sup>197</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Hippolytus', p. 77.

<sup>198</sup> See chapter five, below.

Kenrick was one of a group of radical English scholars who had found in German biblical scholarship a historical method which was very like their own approach to scripture. They rejected the abstractions of dogmatic ideas in favour of history to discover the secrets of the Old and New Testaments. The opinions, objectives and methods of these Unitarian scholars were similar in many respects to some German critics who are correctly seen by Reill as the harbingers of the German Romantic movement and its historicist consciousness.<sup>199</sup> Both sets of scholars rejected Augustinian and Calvinist doctrines such as the atonement, predestination and eternal punishment.<sup>200</sup> In this respect they arrived at such conclusions independently of one another, the Unitarians reacting against Calvinist dogma and the Germans in favour of a spiritual faith rather than a fearful one based upon scholasticism and irrational doctrines.

The idea of verbal inspiration was modified by Unitarians because it perpetuated dogma and hindered the way towards the elimination of false doctrine by means of historical criticism. The rejection of dogma as applicable to all ages was a common belief to Unitarians and Germans, but for very different reasons. Dogma, for those scholars such as John Kenrick who inherited Priestley's legacy had to be eradicated as a corruption of true religion. For Semler and his colleagues, dogma interacted with spirit in history to expand religious consciousness.

It is true that the two sets of scholars had much in common and that there had been some cross fertilisation of ideas during the eighteenth century. It was,

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<sup>199</sup> Reill, *German Enlightenment*, pp. 1-8.

<sup>200</sup> Dyson, 'Theological Legacies', p 57.

however, the case that Unitarians, who were unique not only in their religious beliefs but in their tradition of empiricism and philosophical monism, had evolved their own patterns of belief. The German scholars too, had arrived at historical criticism from an entirely different context, one which had been concerned with the philosophy of Leibniz and the Pietism from which many of them had emerged.

In terms of method, however, Unitarians and Germans functioned identically, and learned much from one another. Both favoured free inquiry into the origins and meaning of texts which clarified the historical circumstances in which the Old and New Testaments had been written. This method, both believed, would shed light upon the origins of faith and on the truths of early Christianity. Commentaries such as that of Michaelis on the Mosaic Laws also gave rise in the two camps to a deeper understanding of relativism and how it could be employed in assessing religious truth. Michaelis' ideas fell like seed on fertile ground, however, for Unitarians had already agreed upon the importance of time and circumstance in biblical interpretation, and it had become easier therefore for them to accept ideas of relativism in biblical history.

The idea of the development of religious forms had been outlined in a negative way in Priestley's *Corruptions*. In Semler it had been expressed within an entirely different configuration of religion, theology and historical context. It is very likely that from these contrasting understandings of religious change Kenrick reached the concept of a progressive religion based upon the desire of a rational scholar to find a place in history for the beliefs of his creed. Kenrick's vision of

theological change, however, was little more than a faint shadow of Semler's more 'Romantic' idea of historical development in relation to religion, but it was nevertheless a subtle alteration of perspective which was of some significance..

Unitarians and Germans agreed on many points. There were, however, two issues on which they could not be reconciled. One was belief in miracles. Many of the Germans, such as Paulus and Eichhorn for example, dismissed them as natural occurrences, while for the Unitarians they formed a basis for belief in revelation. The other important difference between them was the manner whereby they dealt with the relationship between the contingent and the universal with regard to religion. For the Germans, who recognised the problem this presented, the spiritual did not exist outside history. It interacted with the dogma of the age to create tensions which brought about change in the form of an ever expanding religious consciousness. For Unitarians in the post-Priestleyan decades, who did not perceive any difficulty in this area of their thought, early Christianity could be discovered only by eliminating the dogma which had accrued over the ages. The primitive faith uncovered by this historical method was, paradoxically, a-historical, immutable, timeless and universal. It was a 'primitive nucleus' which, simultaneously, had existed in the past, was relevant to all times and circumstances and yet was also, because Kenrick himself believed in a progressive religion, impelled ever forward by the expansion of reason, and therefore also something to be found in a perfect future.

Kenrick's emphasis on the improvement of religious consciousness and understanding as the age became more rational was one step in the right direction towards the idea of religious development. He recognised in Semler, and Spittler also, the idea of variation and change in belief from age to age, brought about by contingent circumstances, and there is evidence here of German influence over Kenrick's view of how a better religious faith might be achieved. This aspect of Kenrick's thought, however, may also be closely linked with Unitarian confidence in moral and rational progress. Unitarians also believed that, unlike the religion of past ages which had been distorted by false doctrine, a rational age required a rational faith.

However, for Unitarians in general, the concept of the German idea of a spiritual element interacting with the external trappings of dogma in each and every age was an alien one. In this particular respect Unitarians and Germans in the period were like travel companions with much in common who had decided it would be convenient to pair up for a journey. Heading towards roughly similar destinations on the same kind of transport, they recognised each other's good points, but failed to get to know one another at a truly fundamental level.

In general terms the Unitarian historical method was in very many respects very akin to that of the Germans. However, the Unitarian empiricist-based historical–biblical scholarship was locked in to a search for a universal belief applicable to all ages. Contrastingly, the German scholars were indeed, as Reill argues, the precursors of the historical consciousness of the nineteenth century. Their understanding of the interaction of the spiritual and the external

forms of religious belief was an early appreciation of the workings of history. Such ideas of historical development formed the early outlines of the German historicism of the nineteenth century. In an analysis of the historical work of David Hume, Friedrich Meinecke quoted a saying of Hegel which he believed was relevant to Hume's history. Hegel had said that empiricism could only fragment the material of history, but was powerless to put it together.<sup>201</sup> In many respects the same quotation could be applied to the Unitarians as they pursued their theological and historical-biblical concerns.

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<sup>201</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London, 1972), p. 186.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ROADS TO HISTORY 1 : THE BIBLE, MYTH, AND HISTORY

At the conclusion to his essay on Hume, Meinecke qualified Hegel's comments and, characteristically, used an organic metaphor to point out that empiricist fragmentation had the effect, nevertheless, of 'loosening the soil' to make it receptive to new seed.<sup>1</sup> These comments could be applied to aspects of the intellectual development of John Kenrick, for in his case 'new seed' did fall upon fertile ground.

The historical biblical method employed by Kenrick and his fellow Unitarian critics to reveal Christianity's primitive, timeless truths had opened up some promising cracks in the earth of the religious writings of the past. However, the Unitarian frame of mind had not given any life to those cohesive historical forms which had been suggested by German critics. There was, however, one important aspect of the engagement of John Kenrick with German critics which contributed to the formation of a new historical consciousness in the mind of John Kenrick, and that was the understanding of the nature of myth and its role in ancient history.

There are two important themes running through this chapter. The first is concerned with the relationship between history and myth in Kenrick's thought,

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London, 1972), p. 186. See chapter four, above, note 201.

both in the Bible and in classical antiquity. The second reflects the importance of historical context in biblical analysis as projected into ideas about the origins of classical myth. The first consolidated and contributed to important concepts of English Romanticism in Kenrick's mind. The second culminated in an appreciation of uniqueness, in a form of cultural relativism and in a recognition of historical development towards nationhood which reflected ideas of the German age of Romanticism. These two themes were carried from Kenrick's approach to history and myth in the Bible into his understanding of the nature and origins of classical myth and were therefore crucial to John Kenrick's intellectual development and to his perspectives as a classical historian.

The first part of this chapter will consider Kenrick's engagement with myth in the Bible and in particular with his opinions of D.F. Strauss. The second section will discuss his thoughts on the interpretation of classical myth. The final section will deal with the implications for his thought which were derived from these sources. The general thrust of this chapter is that Kenrick's approach to biblical and classical myth in this period created some important threads of connection between his radical Enlightenment foundations and the historical and Romantic consciousness of the nineteenth century.

The importance of historical context in biblical interpretation had been recognised by Unitarian scholars in England who wished to reveal the origins and nature of a primitive Christian faith untainted by the 'corruptions' and embellishments of man and his creation of false doctrines. This historical frame of mind and the methodology it had employed had been refined by the



investigations of German scholars whose work had become familiar to Unitarians. However, another way to explain biblical narratives became prevalent amongst German speaking scholars in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. This involved the application to the mysteries of the Bible of those criteria which had been used to interpret classical mythology. Unitarians had been attracted by the German historical method in the identification and interpretation of texts, and in this they had shared some common objectives.<sup>2</sup> However, the exchange of ideas with German scholars also meant that these radical English thinkers began to engage with German ideas on the Bible and myth.

In this late eighteenth-century period there was an overlapping of ideas about the interpretation of classical myth and the problems faced by orientalists and biblical scholars in Germany. Since the 'discovery' of ancient Greece by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768),<sup>3</sup> and the appreciation of its literary and artistic treasures by Lessing and Herder,<sup>4</sup> German intellectuals had been steeped in its history and mythology. The methods of the German classicist and philologist C.J. Heyne, who had taught Eichhorn, was the most important influence on biblical scholars at this time. Heyne was the scholar whose investigation of the politics and mythology of antiquity inspired Thomas Carlyle

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<sup>2</sup> See chapter four, above.

<sup>3</sup> E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 11-48.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51-81.

to write that Heyne 'carried the torch of philosophy towards, if not into, the mysteries of old time'.<sup>5</sup>

One of Heyne's notable achievements was to divide myths into two different types, historical ones which related to actual events or experiences, and philosophical ones which were formed to explain ideas and concepts. Heyne wrote that

The types of the ancient mythical sayings can be only two, the one historical, the other physical and ethical (which have come to be called *philosophemes*).<sup>6</sup>

His ideas were applied by Eichhorn and Eichhorn's pupil, Johann Philipp Gabler, first to the Old and then to the New Testament. For them the book of Genesis was oriental literature and myth, just like any other ancient manuscript, for according to Gabler, the primitive world was everywhere the same.<sup>7</sup> These conclusions initiated the development of a form of biblical interpretation which finally culminated in the controversial opinions, first published in 1835, of the German theologian David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874)<sup>8</sup> Strauss believed that the gospel narratives of the New Testament were mythical projections of the

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Carlyle, 'Life of Heyne', in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 1 *Works*, *The Ashburton Edition* (London, 1887), p. 314.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Gottlob Heyne 'An Interpretation of the Language of Myths or Symbols Traced to Their Reasons and Causes and Thence to Forms and Rules', in Burton Feldman and Robert D. Richardson, *The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680-1860* (Indiana, 1972), p. 223.

<sup>7</sup> E.S. Shaffer, '*Kubla Khan*' and the Fall of Jerusalem: *The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature, 1770-1880* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> A disciple of Hegel, Strauss lectured on the philosopher at the University of Tübingen in the 1830s. Strauss's famous work, *Leben Jesu*, which was published in Germany in 1835 and translated by George Eliot for publication in English in 1846, caused a storm of controversy. In it, Strauss had tried to prove that the gospel narratives were a collection of myths. See below.

author's hopes as manifested in the life of Christ. In classical studies these opinions about myth resulted in the ideas of the scholar Karl Otfried Müller (1795-1840), whose short-lived career contributed much to the study of ancient Greek and Etruscan myth, art, literature and history.

Eichhorn's application of the ideas of Heyne to the interpretation of the Old Testament was first outlined in an anonymous article on Genesis published in 1779, but in fact was written four years earlier.<sup>9</sup> Shaffer points out that for the biblical critics the most important aspect of Heyne's method was that myth was no longer simply fable or poetic fiction, but rather a veiled version of ancient history and philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Initially Eichhorn, following Heyne, had regarded the second and third chapters of Genesis as historical myths because he believed that the events they represented had actually happened. By 1790, however, he had modified his opinion to understand them as philosophical myths which tried to convey the idea of the loss of a golden age.<sup>11</sup> The application of Heyne's ideas to biblical criticism meant that on the question of myth the classical and the biblical had overlapped and the biblical narratives were interpreted as the early form of expression of an ancient people. In their 'mythical' explanations of narratives in both the Old and New Testaments, German scholars from the late-eighteenth century into the early decades of the nineteenth were both courageous and, in relation to the Old Testament at least, often credible.

In his own perception of the role of myth John Kenrick was influenced by that key tenet of Unitarian theology, which was the idea that due to man's own

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<sup>9</sup> John Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (Berlin, 1974) p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Shaffer, 'Kubla Khan', pp. 125-126.

<sup>11</sup> Rogerson, *Old Testament Interpretation*, p. 4.

creations of false doctrine and dogma, there had been a 'corruption' over time of a primitive religious truth, one which could be revealed by the historical method. This fundamental idea directed the general pattern of Kenrick's thought towards a persistent search for original historical truth in all areas of his investigations, whether biblical or classical. Consequently, the idea of the distortion of the 'primitive nucleus' of Christian truth over time by mankind's own creations was in some respects analogous to the idea that myth itself, in both biblical and classical terms, may be considered a form of human embellishment which disguised the original core of historical truth. The general outlines of his thought reveal a sustained conflict between the 'primitive nucleus' of original truth on the one hand and on the other the degree to which that truth had been corrupted over time.

John Kenrick published nothing notable about myth in the Bible until 1827, when he presented to readers of the *Monthly Repository* a contribution to the topic by the critic Johann Jahn (1750-1816).<sup>12</sup> Jahn was a German Roman Catholic biblical scholar who had been professor of oriental studies in Vienna from 1789-1806. Despite the fact that Jahn's theology was anathema to Kenrick and his fellow Unitarians, Kenrick had much to say in favour of the manner in which biblical criticism by Catholics was conducted in Germany. There scholars were not, as they were in England, intellectually isolated for their beliefs, and he noted with more than just a hint of sarcasm that in Germany 'a university is a

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<sup>12</sup> John Kenrick, 'On the Mythical Interpretation of the Bible, From Jahn's Biblical Archæology: With some Preliminary Remarks', *MR*, New Series, No. 9, September 1827, pp. 633-640. Jahn also wrote an *Introduction to the Old Testament*, published in 1792 and *Enchiridion Hermeneuticae*, which appeared in 1812. His most notable work, however, was the *Archæologica Biblica* (1805), which was published in English in 1840.

school for all'.<sup>13</sup> Because Catholic scholars in Germany had been 'placed in the centre of knowledge and investigation',<sup>14</sup> several Roman Catholic theologians had attained a high rank amongst biblical critics. Indeed, Kenrick wrote that it was very likely that Catholic theologians such as Jahn would be seen by future scholars as to have been on some points 'nearer the truth than their Protestant adversaries'.<sup>15</sup>

Jahn had pinpointed some glaring weaknesses in the idea of the mythical interpretation of the Old Testament by contemporary scholars. He argued, for example, that the learned men of early Christianity, who themselves were acquainted with the mythologies of Greece, Egypt and Rome, recognised no myth in the Bible, only historical truth.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, while other mythologies are born in pre-mythic chaos, then develop in polytheism and the deification of sun, moon, stars, demigods, a monstrous chronology and bizarre geography, the Bible history is quite different. It begins with ONE God, the creator, and cites a rational chronology and knowledge of the heavens in simple language. While other mythologies were allowed their freest scope in the earliest ages, the ancient Hebrew documents are 'most meagre in the remotest times, and gradually become more copious'. They were written in such a way that they rejected all but that which could be related with certainty, in other words all that was historical.<sup>17</sup> For Jahn, therefore, the structure and content of the Old

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 634.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 638.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 638-639.

Testament proved that it had been founded to a much greater extent upon the historical than upon the mythical.

It is clear why John Kenrick had sought to present Jahn's views. For Unitarians that which appeared to confirm the unity of God, was of great importance. Also, however, they were quite naturally cautious about theories which attributed biblical narratives entirely to the imagination and mythology of an ancient people. This was because they had absolute confidence in the historical method to prove the existence of that pure, untainted faith of the early Christians, which had been diminished by a haze of theological systems, abstractions and presuppositions. History had replaced abstraction and had undermined those composite and systematised forms of belief which had for centuries clouded the truth about Christianity's true origins. If there now existed the recognition by contemporary German scholars that the myths of the peoples of the Old or New Testaments had been responsible for the biblical narratives, then these myths had to contain a historical 'core'. If they did not and were perceived to have been produced entirely by the imaginative speculations and abstractions of the mind of man, then, for the Unitarians, the crucial concept of the provable historical truth about primitive Christianity would be seriously undermined. This is why Kenrick insisted later that there could never be a boundary between the mythical and the historical, because the former was founded upon the truth of the latter.<sup>18</sup>

A second reason for caution on Kenrick's part with regard to the German mythologists was the fact that myth was almost always understood as including 'all supernatural embellishments of a fact, whether symbolically significant or not'.

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<sup>18</sup> See below.

Kenrick continued, 'To the anti-supernaturalist every miracle is a *mythus*'.<sup>19</sup> The truth of miracles, as we know, was an intrinsic part of the Unitarian belief in revelation, and consequently any attempts to see them relegated completely to the realms of mythology were bound to be opposed.

There were nevertheless some 'miracles' which had no place in Unitarian theology. Twenty one years earlier Thomas Belsham had declared that the accounts of the miraculous conception contained in Matthew and Luke could be considered no more credible than 'the fables of the Koran, or the reveries of Swedenborg'.<sup>20</sup> In this case, of course, Belsham was intent on refuting a narrative which implied the divinity of Christ, and one certain way of doing this was to dismiss it as a myth. As we have seen, always present in the Unitarian frame of mind was an element of expediency which encouraged them to select suitable ideas and to angle them to the perspective which would support their own beliefs.<sup>21</sup> The story of the virgin birth did not happen to be one in which the Unitarians had any belief and therefore it could, without great difficulty, be labelled as 'mythical'. The problems of doctrine were not so acute, of course, with regard to the Old Testament, and in 1825, when Belsham was an old man, he openly questioned the inspiration and truth of the early chapters of Genesis and agreed with the view that this was not a literal description of fact but 'an allegorical story, like the Pilgrim's Progress'.<sup>22</sup> For John Kenrick, however,

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<sup>19</sup> John Kenrick, 'Mythical Interpretation', p. 636.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Belsham, 'Mr. Belsham's Remarks on Mr. Proud's Pamphlet', *MR*, vol. 1, October 1806, p. 587. Belsham was replying to a pamphlet which had asserted the truth of the doctrine of the virgin birth and had attacked Unitarianism's rejection of the doctrine.

<sup>21</sup> See chapter four, above.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Belsham, *MR*, vol. 20, July 1825, p. 416, quoted by Francis Mineka, *The Dissidence of Dissent, the Monthly Repository, 1806-1838* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944), p. 133.

whose engagement with the idea of myth was on a much deeper level than that of Belsham, the historical component of any myth was vital to its interpretation. Rational historical interpretation of the Bible was the *raison d'être* of the Unitarian scholar, and bearing this in mind it is therefore to be expected that Kenrick would have given some support to a view such as Jahn's which argued that in the Old Testament the historical element outweighed the mythical.

There were other chances for Kenrick to express his confidence in the historical method. In the years after 1827, when his concerns on the subject were mainly directed towards myth in relation to ancient history, there were nevertheless several articles in which he discusses the subject of myth in the Bible. These are particularly interesting for two reasons. Firstly, they all comment, albeit briefly, upon the work of D.F. Strauss and secondly they provide an additional insight into Kenrick's ideas on the Bible, myth and history.<sup>23</sup> It would have been impossible for Kenrick to have ignored Strauss' *Life of Jesus*. There had been a strong reaction to the work,<sup>24</sup> for Strauss claimed to have destroyed the entire historical basis for belief in Christianity<sup>25</sup> and along with that

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<sup>23</sup> John Kenrick, 'On the Narratives of the Crucifixion', *CR*, vol. 1, April 1845, pp. 197-206. 'The Relation of the Third to the First Two Gospels', Review Article of *Jo. Jac. Griesbachii Commentatio quo Marci Evangelium totum a Matthæi et Lucæ Commentariis decerptum esse monstratum*. Opuscula Academica, Vol. 11, ed. Gabler. Jenæ, (1825), *PR*, vol. 6 (1850), pp. 60-76. 'The Gift of Tongues', Review Article of *Die Glossolalie in der alten Kirche, in dem Zusammenhang der Geistesgaben und des Geisteslebens des alten Christenthums*; von Adolph Hilgenfeld : The Gift of Tongues in the Ancient Church, in connection with the spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Life of Ancient Christendom. By Adolph Hilgenfeld. Leipzig. 1850, *PR*, vol 8 (1852), pp. 303-317. 'The Gospel of Mark the Protevangelium', in *Biblical Essays* (London, 1864), pp. 1-68, and lastly, 'Jewish Conceptions of the Messiah', Review Article of *Jésus-Christ, ou Les Croyances Messianiques de son Temps*. Par T. Colani. Deuxième édition, revue et augmentée. Strasburg and Paris. 1864, *TR*, no. 8, May 1865, pp. 241-254.

<sup>24</sup> Horton Harris, *David Friedrich Strauss and his Theology* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 41. For Strauss' impact see also Peter Hodgson (ed.), Introduction in David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia, 1972), p.xvii.

<sup>25</sup> Harris, *Strauss and His Theology*, p. 41.



had denied the existence of the miraculous and the supernatural. Strauss' primary objective in his sensational *Life of Jesus* was to provide an alternative explanation to the often ambiguous and contradictory rational-historical interpretation of the Bible. His contention was that mythical narratives about the life of Christ which had been prophesied in the Old Testament arose in the minds of individuals who related them to others and within a short time they were accepted as fact. The whole gospel narrative, which had been built around the expectations of men at the time of Christ, existed only as a mythical expression of the human consciousness.

Strauss explained how the '*pure mythus*' in the gospels had come about. He wrote that two sources had contributed simultaneously, though 'in different proportions to form the mythus'.<sup>26</sup> The first was the collection of 'Messianic ideas and expectations' in the Jewish mind before Jesus which had formed independently of him. The second was that body of impressions left by the character, actions and fate of Jesus, which 'served to modify the Messianic idea in the minds of his people'.<sup>27</sup> Strauss had devised a mythical explanation for the whole story of Christ which at a stroke had swept away the foundations of historical criticism. However, he had also conceded that there were individual events and facts which, clouded and obscured as they were in the mists of the *mythus*, nevertheless undoubtedly had taken place. The birth of Christ, of course, was included as one of these core historical events. This had been a *historical mythus*, which had been founded upon a 'definite individual fact which has been

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<sup>26</sup> Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, Section 15, p. 86.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

seized upon by religious enthusiasm, and twined around with mythical conceptions culled from the idea of the Christ'.<sup>28</sup>

From John Kenrick's different reactions to Strauss in the various arguments contained in these five articles,<sup>29</sup> three aspects of Kenrick's thought in relation to biblical criticism and history become clear, and it is apparent which of them are most important. In these publications Kenrick revealed his opinion of the German's controversial mythical approach, his lasting acceptance of tenets of the Unitarian tradition, and reminded the readers of the nature of his understanding of the true relationship between history and myth in the Bible. His comments also showed that his approach to historical criticism and his concerns on the topic of myth and history did not change during his productive intellectual lifetime.

Kenrick made his opinion of Strauss clear in the 1845 article, in which he assessed different accounts of the crucifixion of Christ. With regard to neglect of the importance of history in interpretation he compared Strauss to the harmonists, who tried to make 'one consistent narrative out of the contradictory accounts of the evangelists'.<sup>30</sup> He made the point that Strauss

with equal neglect of the principles of historical criticism, raises a suspicion from their discrepancy, that the whole has no foundation of fact, but is a mythic web, spun out of supposed prophecies of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> See note 23, above.

<sup>30</sup> Kenrick, 'Narratives of the Crucifixion', p 205, note \*.

Messiah.<sup>31</sup>

Seven years later, in a review article concerned with the 'gift of tongues' supposedly granted to the apostles at the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit, Kenrick turned the tables on Strauss on the question of discrepancies in the narrative. Kenrick believed that the incident, during which the apostles were supposed to have spoken in foreign languages, may be explained by the fact that they had become inarticulate in their speech through excitement and religious fervour. Although such an explanation may be 'repulsive to our refinement'....'we must not judge the East by the standard of the West'....for 'such a state, when evidently produced by religious emotion, was regarded by the Jews with awe and reverence'.<sup>32</sup> Neither, he wrote, should we regard such an incident as miraculous, for we should be in great danger of error 'if we transfer modern ideas to the mind of St. Paul, and suppose that *spiritual* in his sense was equivalent to *miraculous* in ours'.<sup>33</sup>

From his historical analysis Kenrick concluded that explanations for the phenomenon were most probably commonplace. It may have been simply that idea of the 'tongues' could be attributed to the inarticulate voices of excited people, or the fact that there had been many different languages in Corinth, which had been a cosmopolitan port in the period. Whatever the explanation, the idea of speaking in tongues at Pentecost, which was to be found nowhere in the gospels, was very different from Jesus' promise to his disciples that the Holy

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>32</sup> Kenrick, 'The Gift of Tongues', pp. 310, 311.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

Spirit would enlighten their minds, remind them of his teachings and 'guide them into all truth'.<sup>34</sup>

In the final paragraph Kenrick delivered his opinion on Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, remarking that the German believed only that a certain conception of Christ had formed itself in the minds of the early Christians. Strauss had asserted that the gospels did not contain a narrative of what Christ really said and did, but what might be supposed to have been his words and actions. Consequently, the German's hypothesis had the idea that 'the gospels do not exhibit Christ to us in the truth of history'.<sup>35</sup> Clearly Kenrick's primary objection to Strauss' ideas was that they were not historical. By his late seventies, Kenrick's opinion of Strauss' hypothesis had not changed. He described the German's theory as a 'set of fictitious adventures', which had been devised with the objective of realising the Jewish conception of the Messiah. Kenrick's final opinion of Strauss was that

the ingenuity of the author is much more strikingly displayed than his candour or the soundness of his criticism....[For] in this way the historical Christ disappears entirely.<sup>36</sup>

Once again, it seems, Kenrick's poor opinion of Strauss is largely based upon the fact that the German has attempted to demolish the entire edifice of the historical criticism which was so close to the heart of Kenrick and other Unitarian scholars.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>36</sup> Kenrick, 'Jewish Conceptions of the Messiah', p. 242.

However, there were two other short works published in 1850 and 1864 in which Kenrick's references to Strauss were more conciliatory. They were both related to the Unitarian's greatest concern, the gospel of Mark and its contribution to the history of the life of Jesus. To prove that Mark was the earliest and therefore the most reliable of the synoptic gospels was of great importance not only to Kenrick but to all Unitarians. If it could be shown that Mark's gospel was credible and had been written nearer to the time of Christ than the other two it could then be argued convincingly that historically, it was the most accurate. For Unitarians, the crucial factor was, that unlike Matthew, nowhere does Mark make any mention of the virgin birth or any of the events surrounding it. Proof of the historical truth of Mark, therefore, would have weakened all other assertions concerning the birth of Christ, and the assumptions it carried with regard to his divinity would have been seriously undermined.

According to Kenrick the 'primitive and genuine tradition...began, as Mark's gospel begins, with the preaching of the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus – Jesus from Nazareth'.<sup>37</sup> Here, Kenrick made an explicit point about Jesus having been a Nazarene rather than one born in Bethlehem a point with which Strauss readily agreed because it had been Matthew's 'prophetic requisition that, as Messiah, he should be born at Bethlehem'.<sup>38</sup> Kenrick wrote that historical criticism had never been able to explain the 'misapplication of prophecy in the narrative of Matthew', along with the improbable stories of the 'Magi and the travelling star, of the massacre of Bethlehem and the flight into Egypt' and also

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<sup>37</sup> Kenrick, *Biblical Essays*, p. 41.

<sup>38</sup> Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, Section 32, p. 190.

the chronology of Luke with regard to the mention of Herod's jealousy.<sup>39</sup> The events as related by Matthew 'have an air of romance and of adaptation to subsequent conceptions of our Lord's character'.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, wrote Kenrick,

Strauss appears to me to be completely successful, when he refers the origin of this history to the desire to realise the Jewish idea of the manner, in which the appearance of the Messiah should be ushered in.<sup>41</sup>

Considering Kenrick's previous opinions on Strauss this appears rather a surprising statement. It may be explained, however, by the sheer strength of Kenrick's Unitarian convictions. Despite his rejection of Strauss' hypothesis in general he made use of the German's idea in this particular case in order to undermine Matthew's narrative. The use of Strauss' theory in this way enabled Kenrick to differentiate more clearly between Matthew, a gospel which had been hostage to prophecies and mythic fantasies, and Mark, a solidly credible, simple, unadorned, earlier version of the life of Christ which cast some light upon the origins of the true, primitive, historical Christian faith.

In 1850, Kenrick had made use of Strauss' mythical theory once again. Describing Strauss' attack on the evidences of revelation like that of 'Red Republicans and Socialists on the institutions of society',<sup>42</sup> Kenrick conceded that there was nevertheless something to be learned from his theories. The

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<sup>39</sup> Kenrick, *Biblical Essays*, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40. For Strauss' version of the birth of Christ, see *Life of Jesus*, Section 32, pp. 152-190.

<sup>41</sup> Kenrick, *Biblical Essays*, p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> Kenrick, 'The Relation of the Third to the First Two Gospels', p. 75.

distinction between myth and history cannot be drawn chronologically. The so-called apostolic age, within which miracles are credible and beyond which all is fabulous, cannot be defined as a period. It was not by the complete denial of the possibility that mythic narratives should have gained belief among Christians that Strauss should be encountered, but by discrimination between the mythic and historical elements within them.

Kenrick's view was that the mythic ingredients increased in direct proportion with 'the time that intervenes between the supposed occurrence of a fact and its record in writing'.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, if the earliest history of Christ's ministry had been compiled no earlier than the middle or end of the second century after his birth then 'it would not have been easy to dissipate the haze in which Strauss has invested it'.<sup>44</sup> It was for this reason, he wrote, that he tried to show that Mark's gospel contained 'a very early if not a contemporaneous record'.<sup>45</sup> Because the Bible was historically valid, there was no such thing as a biblical narrative derived purely from myth alone and consequently, his view of history and myth in the Bible was that

The tares and the wheat, the true and the false narrative, sprang up together, the occurrence of the true wonder being indeed the excitement to the production of the false.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Thus, history and myth developed alongside one another, the former engendering the latter.

History for the rational Unitarian scholars was the best possible way to eliminate false doctrine, and a powerful weapon of defence against the assaults of orthodoxy. It was a core factor in the Unitarian understanding and interpretation of the scriptures and in the particular case of the truth of Mark's gospel. Myth was not a replacement for historical truth, but, like the 'corruptions' of dogma, was rather a human embellishment which grew around the 'primitive nucleus whence developments proceed'.<sup>47</sup> Although Kenrick rejected Strauss' hypothesis as a general concept he was willing, nevertheless, to concede the German's insight when it came to proving a point concerning Mark's gospel. This treatment of Strauss in these two articles reveals the strength of Kenrick's Unitarian beliefs about the simple humanity of Christ and the influence of the Unitarian historical-biblical tradition on his thought. Kenrick's approach to the idea of myth in the Bible was in accordance with the Unitarian pattern of religious thought, which believed that a primitive, original truth had been distorted by later 'corruptions' which had in turn led to false doctrines. This applied to myth as well as the fabrications of orthodox dogma.

The points raised by Kenrick on Strauss were all made after 1845, indicating initially that his thoughts on Mark's gospel were formed later in his life. However, the belief that the gospel was an early, independent account of Christ's ministry had been a feature of the Unitarian tradition which had been inherited by Kenrick. The idea that Mark's was an original and historically accurate narrative

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<sup>47</sup> Alexander Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History* (London, 1895), p. 120.



of Christ's life rather than simply a version which epitomised Matthew and Luke had been already proposed, both by Nathaniel Lardner and John Kentish.<sup>48</sup> In addition, as early as 1808, in an article on Griesbach<sup>49</sup> and the German's assessment of ancient documents, Kenrick had already revealed a frame of mind which was very similar.

Kenrick's advice to the biblical critic was not to strike a balance between manuscripts, citations and versions which favoured one reading or another of a 'doubtful passage'. Rejecting any form of harmonisation, his plan should be to examine each one on its own merits, in this case the Alexandrian and Western manuscripts, and determine which were the genuine versions. He wrote that if even 'two or three are *independent* testimonies, they outweigh a hundred, who repeat the reading from each other or from some common authority'.<sup>50</sup> Kenrick's was a frame of mind concerned with the origins of historical sources in the Bible which were nearest to the actual events and which represented the 'springhead' of truth. If biblical accounts were obscured by the corruptions of false dogma, the fantasies of myth, or had been merged with other versions, then these should be removed and the historically truthful origins revealed.

Such ideas were reflected in aspects of Kenrick's thought on classical scholarship, particularly that relating to the understanding of myth. In Kenrick, as was the case with the German mythologists, concepts relating to both the biblical and the classical developed alongside one another and this he recognised early

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<sup>48</sup> See chapter three, above.

<sup>49</sup> John Kenrick, 'Sketch of the Life, and Notices of the Writings, of Dr. John James Griesbach', *MR*, vol. 3, January 1808, pp. 1-9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

in his intellectual lifetime. The most important figure in this early period was Heyne, with whose work he first became familiar during his studies at Glasgow College in the years 1807 to 1810. It was only a few years later that he began to develop ideas on the nature of myth and its interaction with history.

There were two very distinctive features of Heyne's thought. The first concerned the relationship of myth and history, the second the origins of myth. For Heyne myths represented the early attempts of the primitive peoples of ancient nations to explain their experiences and express their ideas. Myth was not divorced from true experience; rather it was the oldest history and the oldest philosophy.<sup>51</sup> In the historical type the myth contained a core of concrete truth and thus myth and history were interactive, and there could therefore never be any clearly defined boundary between them. Myth was perceived as the embellishment or distortion of historical truth, and in such a way were religions 'mixed and coalesced' ... or in other ways 'twisted out of their proper shape'.<sup>52</sup>

The most important task of the interpreter of the classical myth, which was so intertwined with ancient history, was to distinguish times and ages. He had to separate those past times in which poets and philosophers had altered myths by 'fitting their imaginations merely to their own opinions', by embellishing, or by setting out 'to stitch different ages together'.<sup>53</sup> Only if true and false are separated will the interpreter understand the history of the human race, and only then would it be the case that 'we are brought back to primitive simplicity and

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<sup>51</sup> Shaffer, *'Kubla Khan'*, p. 125.

<sup>52</sup> Heyne, 'Interpretation of Myths', (no page given) in Feldman and Richardson, *Rise of Modern Mythology*, p. 221.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

speaking'.<sup>54</sup> Complementary to this was Heyne's second point, which was that myths had strictly local origins, and he wrote that the 'myths of single peoples...have manifested themselves each in a separate way'.<sup>55</sup> These, he emphasised, had to be 'interpreted and understood in terms of the popular tradition' and studied according to the thinking of the times and the authors, and from the viewpoint of 'faith, truth, authority and judgement of those who handed these things down'.<sup>56</sup> The origins of myths were strictly localised, and to be found only in the early history of each separate people.

Heyne's place in the history of ideas is an important one. Shaffer believes that he represented the early stages of a transition from Enlightenment ideas of an abstract, rational religion to Romantic views of mythic symbolism.<sup>57</sup> However, Heyne's transition may also be linked to subtle changes in the concepts surrounding the nature of historical development. He believed that all myths had local origins, and this being the case the mythology of a particular people had to be intrinsic to its own distinctive history and philosophy. Heyne and other German writers of the period, notably Herder, gave strength to the idea of uniqueness in mythic origins and the sense of the creation of a cultural ethos which belonged to that people and no other.

By the time John Kenrick encountered such ideas in his classical studies he had been well schooled in the skills of Unitarian biblical criticism by his tutor John Kentish and was highly competent in the German language, having been

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 221-222.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

tutored by Thomas Foster Barham in his teenage years.<sup>58</sup> When he left Glasgow College in 1810, Kenrick had already written two articles on the work of Griesbach<sup>59</sup> and had translated the passage by the German critic Ludwig Timothy Spittler.<sup>60</sup> Just a year after he graduated in 1810 his article on J.D. Michaelis appeared in the *Monthly Repository*.<sup>61</sup>

At Glasgow College from 1807 to 1810, he was introduced to the ideas of Heyne. Professor John Young, whose private Greek classes Kenrick attended, was familiar with the work of the German scholar. As early as 1793, Young had written to his friend Samuel Rose in London, asking him to send on to him in Glasgow a work by Heyne.<sup>62</sup> Six years later, in 1799, Young mentions Heyne once again, this time in a letter to another friend, the critic Charles Burney,<sup>63</sup> and in 1803, in a further letter to Burney,<sup>64</sup> Young writes of Heyne, Ernesti,<sup>65</sup> and the controversial Homeric scholar Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824).<sup>66</sup>

It is very likely that the ideas Young gained from Heyne and others were passed on to the young Kenrick to have what would turn out to be a lasting influence on his star pupil. By the end of his studies at Glasgow there had built up a strong mutual respect between Young and his student, John Kenrick. Young

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<sup>58</sup> See chapter three, above.

<sup>59</sup> John Kenrick, Review Article on *Novum Testamentum Græce. Textum, ad fidem Codicum, Versionum & Patrum, recensuit, & lectionis varietatem adjecit*, D. Jo. Jac. Griesbach. Vol. ii. Ed. 2da. Halæ. 1806. Londini apud Payne et Mackinlay. 1807, *MR*, vol. 2, 1807, pp.151-213 and 266-270, and Kenrick, 'Sketch of the Life, and Notices of the Writings, of Dr. John James Griesbach', *MR*, vol. 3, January 1808, pp. 1-9.

<sup>60</sup> John Kenrick, 'Extract from Professor Spiltner's "Elements of Ecclesiastical History"', *MR*, vol. 3, February 1808, pp. 72-74. See chapter three, above, note 151.

<sup>61</sup> John Kenrick, 'Sketch of the Life, Writings and Character of John David Michaelis, Professor of Philosophy at Göttingen', *MR*, vol. 6, January 1811, pp. 1-8 and February 1811, pp. 65-71.

<sup>62</sup> John Young to Samuel Rose, 27 January 1793, GUL Special Collections, MSS. Gen. 520/50.

<sup>63</sup> John Young to Charles Burney, 1799, NLS, MSS. 1006, fol. 94.

<sup>64</sup> John Young to Charles Burney, 7 January 1803, GUL, Special Collections, MSS. Gen. 503/2,

<sup>65</sup> Johann August Ernesti (1707-1781) was a classical and biblical scholar and professor at Leipzig from 1742 who applied historical and philological methodology to the interpretation of scripture.

<sup>66</sup> See note 90, below and related text.

wrote in a testimonial that he had seldom met with a finer young man than Kenrick, whose 'parts are uncommon and have already received uncommon cultivation'.<sup>67</sup> It was his opinion, and that of others also, that on the question of intellectual prowess Kenrick was 'already a man and in language is as far advanced as those who write for the world'.<sup>68</sup>

It was also the case that Kenrick held Young in high esteem. He wrote to his great uncle, Samuel Kenrick, himself a former student at Glasgow,<sup>69</sup> that Young, who had a philosophical approach to the study of the Greek language, was 'a man of very elegant taste'...whose translations were beautiful and who delivered his lectures in such an animated way 'as sets them off when they are dull and bears them out where they are extravagant'.<sup>70</sup> Thus it is clear that John Young would have regarded Kenrick's mind as fertile ground for the reception of new ideas from Germany about classical myth and in turn Kenrick would have most certainly taken Young's enthusiasm for writers such as Heyne very seriously indeed. Young was an innovative scholar and teacher and presented to his pupils some very original thoughts on classical philology and the development of language.<sup>71</sup>

Together, the legacy of Unitarian biblical criticism, Young's influence and with it that of Heyne, were to have a profound effect on Kenrick's intellectual development towards an appreciation of the culturally unique in history. In 1816,

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<sup>67</sup> John Young to Lant Carpenter, May 1810, UCL, Sharpe Papers, 198.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Samuel Kenrick (1728-1811), to whom his great nephew, John, showed great fondness, matriculated at Glasgow in 1743, when Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) was professor of moral philosophy there. Hutcheson was the precursor of the Scottish school of 'common sense' philosophy.

<sup>70</sup> John Kenrick to Samuel Kenrick, 30 May 1808, HMCL, MSS. Misc 7, fols. 291-292.

<sup>71</sup> See chapter six, below.

six years after he had left Glasgow to take up his post as tutor at Manchester College in York and three years before he left for a study year in Göttingen and Berlin, Kenrick wrote on history, myth and the local origins of myth in an essay entitled 'A Specimen of the application of Historical Principles to the Explanation of the Greek Mythology'.<sup>72</sup>

The essay, which as far as may be determined was never published, is not dated, but there is abundant evidence to prove that it was written in 1816. Firstly, in a letter from York to the Manchester College trustee George William Wood in February 1816, Kenrick referred to a parcel containing a paper which he had sent to Thomas Robinson, who was Chairman of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society at the time. Kenrick wrote that he hoped that if Robinson did not think the paper was too long and tedious he [Robinson] would agree to read it to the society.<sup>73</sup> Kenrick added that the paper was concerned with the interpretation of Greek mythology and wrote that 'as some of the principles are, as I believe at least, new', he wished to have the 'judgement of any persons who may take an interest in such investigations'.<sup>74</sup> Secondly, the paper may be dated conclusively from a comment made by Kenrick on the title page<sup>75</sup> concerning a contemporary work due for publication at the time.

Discussing his own proposals to clarify the sources of Greek myth, he wrote with

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<sup>72</sup> John Kenrick, 'A Specimen of the Application of Historical Principles to the Explanation of the Greek Mythology', DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.50 (n).

<sup>73</sup> The fate of this paper after it was sent to Thomas Robinson I was unable to determine. It appears that a large amount of material relating to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society was stored in the Manchester Central Library, but much was lost during the bombing of the city during World War 2.

<sup>74</sup> John Kenrick to George William Wood, York, 1 February, 1816, HMCL, MSS. Wood 3, fol. 38.

<sup>75</sup> The pages are not numbered, but amount in total, including the left hand pages which sometimes contain references, to forty four. I have referred to the pages here by numbering them as in the form of a pamphlet, from left to right, page by page, unless the left hand page happens to be empty.

a light touch of sarcasm that ‘at this moment the press groans with ‘three 4to’ volumes of Mr. Faber, which are to demonstrate its origins in a source never suspected before’.<sup>76</sup> Kenrick was referring to George Stanley Faber’s three-volume work entitled *The Origin of Pagan Idolatry Ascertained from Historical Testimony and Circumstantial Evidence*, which was in fact published in 1816.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, there is no doubt that this essay was written in 1816 in the hope that it might be read to the Manchester society.

This early essay of Kenrick’s myth revealed an integration of ideas between Unitarian biblical criticism and the interpretation of classical myth. As we have seen, the Unitarian frame of mind was of great importance in defining the terms of Kenrick’s engagement with D.F. Strauss with regard to myth and the Bible. Similarly, that same historical-biblical mindset was crucial in encouraging Kenrick’s reception of the ideas of Heyne on classical myth, which in turn helped to shape Kenrick’s own ideas on that subject and also its relationship with history.

In the essay, Kenrick made clear his familiarity with the work of Heyne, and his own general agreement with his propositions. The Unitarian scholar agreed with Heyne that the narratives about those mythical creatures which had preceded Jupiter constituted ‘the symbolical language in which a rude people clothed their speculations on the phænomena of nature’.<sup>78</sup> Kenrick’s only adverse comment was that in certain cases perhaps Heyne limited his

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<sup>76</sup> Kenrick, ‘Historical Principles’. This quotation is taken from the title page, or page 1.

<sup>77</sup> George Stanley Faber (1773-1854) was an Anglican divine and tutor at Lincoln College, Oxford, whose approach to mythology was founded upon a belief that all the world’s myths were corrupted versions of the original stories of the Bible.

<sup>78</sup> Kenrick, ‘Historical Principles’, p. 3.

explanation too exclusively to the 'symbolical expression of the irregular and violent action of the powers of Nature'.<sup>79</sup> Concerning those stories of the gods who had preceded the birth of Jupiter, Kenrick had followed the account of Apollodorus. He wrote that he had done this for two reasons, firstly because he had to choose the work of someone as a basis for the inquiry and secondly 'because Heyne has conveyed his own views in the form of a commentary on this author'.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, in his notes to Apollodorus and in various papers in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Göttingen*, Heyne had been the first to point out 'the true interpretation of this part of the Grecian fables'.<sup>81</sup>

Kenrick made one brief mention of Nicholas Freret<sup>82</sup> with regard to the Frenchman's argument against Newton's chronology<sup>83</sup> and his belief that this part of Greek mythology was a history of the systems of worship which prevailed in Greece. Apart from Freret, however, Heyne was the only other critic to whom Kenrick referred in his essay, and he did so at least six times. These references were made on points related to the general theme. They were comments by Kenrick on questions of degree or perspective rather than any fundamental disagreement on the major precepts of Heyne's argument.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 8. Kenrick agreed with Heyne that the mythological speculations surrounding the powers of nature, battles between good and evil and narratives such as those surrounding Saturn, Cronos and their offspring were symbolic and had no historical foundations. The period of interaction between history and myth began with the birth of Jupiter and the god's connections with the island of Crete, where he was initially worshipped. See *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>82</sup> Nicholas Freret (1688-1749) was a classical historian interested in myth, chronology and history. He investigated the comparative value of documents to distinguish between their historical and mythical content.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 17. See Nicholas Freret, *Défence de la chronologie, fondée sur les monumens de l'histoire ancienne* (Paris, 1758).



There are several aspects of the essay which are striking. Kenrick made the point that the principles contained in it were new.<sup>84</sup> This was certainly true, for the whole essay was constructed around the two original and crucial ideas of Heyne, the first that history and myth were interactive and could not be separated, the second that the origins of myths were localised and they were unique to each separate people who created them. Accordingly, the critic's method, Kenrick wrote, should be to ascertain the oldest fables of the Greeks respecting their gods, and

to trace them upwards, as far as historical evidence will enable him to do it to their local origin.<sup>85</sup>

The initial point about this quotation is that it shows that Kenrick agreed with Heyne on those two important elements of mythic interpretation, firstly Heyne's conviction, apart from in the case of the most ancient Greek deities, that myth and history were complementary to one another and secondly the idea which naturally sprang from this, that the origins of myth were localised. Also, however, the quotation refers to Kenrick's intended method, which he regards as entirely original, for, he wrote that he proposed a course of proceeding

which as far as he has observed has not been adopted by any of those who have written on this subject.<sup>86</sup>

He saw the essay as original clearly not only because it contained these important new ideas of Heyne's regarding history, myth and its origins, but also

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<sup>84</sup> See note 76, above.

<sup>85</sup> Kenrick, 'Historical Principles', p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

on the grounds that his [Kenrick's] own methodology, the way in which he himself intended to *develop* Heyne's ideas, was indeed also new.

Crucially Kenrick's method of interpreting myth was formed along the same conceptual lines and was analogous to the approach he had used in biblical criticism. He incorporated into the interpretation of classical myth concepts from the Unitarian tradition of historical analysis. Early in the essay Kenrick wrote that he was convinced that more might be done towards establishing the outlines of a method of interpretation of Greek mythology which would establish its 'source and primary meaning....if we would be guided by history and not by the love of a pre-established system'.<sup>87</sup> By the latter he meant that form of analysis, in which not only is there no distinction between the myths of different ages, but the marriages and births, the genealogies and adventures of deities are taught 'in the same affirmative historical time, as if they were the truths of our own religion'.<sup>88</sup> Little care, he added, had been taken in the discrimination of the evidence for the existence of those opinions related to the 'age, the country, the character, or the prejudices of the writer who furnishes it'.<sup>89</sup> The descriptions of terms related to the importance of true historical origins, as opposed to the falsity of later, composite, a-historical versions, were in many respects analogous to the Unitarian historical biblical method of interpretation.

Even Homer was guilty of the distortion of myth. Twenty one years earlier, in 1795, the small volume which shook the world of classical studies to the core, the *Prolegomena ad Homerum* of F.A. Wolf (1759-1824), had been published.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 1,4.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

Sensationally, it had contended that there had been no single author of the great classical poetic works, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but that later editors had compiled them from a series of ballads of much earlier origin.<sup>90</sup> Wolf's work was eagerly read by contemporary critics who had already grasped the notion of original, natural, primitive poetry, and Homer was the poet most under discussion from that time onwards.<sup>91</sup>

Kenrick's own view of Homer's compilation was that it was unhistorical. Homer was like other writers, Kenrick wrote, and indeed may be even compared to a Neoplatonist 'seeking to spiritualise the grossness of the ancient mythology', or even a Christian apologist 'not averse from exaggerating its defects'. The combination of all these testimonies produced a 'system' which 'certainly was never received at any one period as the general belief'.<sup>92</sup> The interpreters of myth had 'applied their systems'<sup>93</sup> to a mass of heterogeneously composed primitive fables, poetical embellishments and philosophical refinements, with the result that the historical truth about the origins of myth had been distorted.

His frame of mind in the essay on these points was strikingly similar to that which already had been revealed in his biblical criticism. It ought to be remembered that in his critique of Griesbach, published as early as 1808, Kenrick had advocated the pursuit of the single, independent source of truth rather than being content with a composite or harmonisation of different accounts

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<sup>90</sup>For a concise account of the content and influence of Wolf's *Prolegomena*, see Rudolph Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 173-177.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>92</sup>Kenrick, 'Historical Principles', p. 4.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

from several manuscripts.<sup>94</sup> In Unitarian biblical criticism the general theme was a rejection of the systematic, the presupposed and the artificially constructed way of understanding the past in favour of a direct, concrete historical approach. It seems that he applied an analogous set of ideas to the interpretation of ancient myth. In the essay Kenrick expressed himself in the language of the Unitarian biblical critic, and in his analysis reflected some of those concepts with which he was familiar in this respect. Although the context was clearly different, his proposed method repeated the importance of findings the origins and the truth about the source and the beginnings of things.

There was almost in some respects, if not a confluence of ideas, at least a projection of a similar frame of mind, from Unitarian biblical criticism into the problem of the interpretation of classical myth. Kenrick's method, derived from what he had learned about the objectives of Unitarian biblical scholarship to seek for the primary origins, was applied to the pre-Romantic precepts of Heyne. While clearly these were aspects of two sets of divergent ideas, in this particular instance they locked together with the ease of two parts of a well-worn jigsaw. Kenrick's development of Heyne's ideas was guided by that fundamental element of Unitarian biblical criticism which sought the 'springhead' or 'primitive nucleus' of truth about a simple Christian faith.

In the case of myth the 'springhead' towards which the historian should ascend was represented by the source of primitive mythic origins. The historian's task was to understand the relationship between the factual and the fabulous in order to trace the myth back to its origins, which were local rather than part of

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<sup>94</sup> See notes 49 and 50 above.

some composite system which in itself represented a 'corruption' or the original myth. This curious intersection of two similar patterns of ideas provides a link between radical English thought and that form of German scholarship which represented the birth of a nineteenth century historical consciousness concerned with the uniqueness of historical periods and of the cultures produced within them. The ideas of Heyne on the interpretation of myth had fallen on fertile ground which had been carefully prepared by the Unitarian historical biblical method. The result was that John Kenrick had recognised the historical potential of developing Heyne's ideas further fully thirty years before the classicist and archaeologist Karl Otfried Müller (1797-1871), had aired them in English in 1846.<sup>95</sup>

The effect of this intellectual merger was to have significant implications for the thought of John Kenrick. Firstly, the idea that history and myth together ought to be perceived as one single form of development coincided with a more 'Romantic' frame of mind.<sup>96</sup> Secondly, the idea that the myth of a people was unique to them alone, guided him towards an historical consciousness which was to be more sensitive to the relativistic and the unique in cultural development.

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<sup>95</sup> Karl Otfried Müller's work *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology* (London, 1844), first appeared in German in 1825. It was translated by a Scottish scholar John Leitch and published in English almost twenty years later. For my own appreciation of the work and its significance in the context of John Kenrick and myth, see Alison Kennedy, 'John Leitch, John Kenrick, History and Myth: The Textbook as a Sign of Intellectual change', *Paradigm, Journal of the Textbook Colloquium*, vol. 2, issue 4, December 2001, pp. 13-22. For a compact but comprehensive study of Müller, who was a pupil of the philologist August Boeckh (1785-1867), and who became Professor of Ancient Literature at Göttingen in 1819 at the tender age of twenty two, see John William Donaldson's introduction to Müller's *History of the Literature of Ancient Greece*, 3 vols (London, 1858). See also G.P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1967), pp. 33-38, and also J.E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship* (Cambridge, 1958), vol. 3, pp. 213-216.

<sup>96</sup> See below.

Heyne's first important proposition, that history and myth were inseparable, was assimilated into Kenrick's thought. It linked myth and the imaginative process which produced it with the historical and cultural development of ancient peoples. However, in the 1816 essay, Kenrick cited two forms of mythic expression which could *not* be considered as having any historical foundation. The first was that collection of minor deities, nymphs and muses who were products of the Greek imagination and poetic fancy and who often represented abstract qualities.<sup>97</sup> The greater, ancient gods, such as Cronos, who preceded the birth of Jupiter, who formed the symbolical expression of the world's beginnings, were the second group. Such stories, of cataclysmic conflicts between heaven and earth, between good and evil, were similar in many ways to the mythologies of other ancient nations.<sup>98</sup>

The first concrete evidence of the interaction of myth and history was to be found when Rhea, pregnant with Jupiter, came to the island of Crete, for it was Crete which was generally believed to have been the birthplace of the god. Kenrick presented some specific arguments to back up his theory that the worship of Jupiter was not, however, indigenous to Crete. His view was that Jupiter's early appearance on the island was due to the arrival of Phoenician colonists who brought with them bull worship in the form of the Minotaur. This may have engendered the well-known fable of Jupiter transforming himself into a bull to carry off Europa to Crete. For Kenrick, myth was closely linked to other cultural effects and he believed that the theological system of a people not

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<sup>97</sup> Kenrick, 'Historical Principles', p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-17.

favoured by divine revelation 'must be very much influenced by the same causes, which bring to perfection their other ideas'.<sup>99</sup> In this way the myth reflected the cultural and historical circumstances which produced it, and consequently much could be learned from the understanding of the myth within its proper context.

A methodology which embarked upon an analysis of the ancient past on the basis of a correlative relationship between myth and history could also show how the former had often corrupted the truth of the latter. A year later, in 1817, he established that Assyrian deities had been perceived as real historical figures because the legends of mythology had been simply converted into history. He added wryly that the deeds of Ninus and Semiramis had no better claim to be received as history 'than the conquest of India by Bacchus'.<sup>100</sup> Kenrick's conclusion was that 'The earliest annals of every ancient nation, except the Jewish, have been corrupted in the same way as the Assyrian'.<sup>101</sup>

A dozen years later, in a review of *Römische Geschichte* [The Roman History], by B.G. Niebuhr (1776-1831) and some related works, Kenrick criticised English historians who had, he believed, 'never seized the true spirit of antiquity'. Instead of reproducing a 'living picture of ancient times', he accused them of having been content to compose their histories by 'combining or...contrasting the narratives of the Greek and Latin writers themselves'.<sup>102</sup> Such a procedure

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> John Kenrick, *On the Possibility of Reconciling the Scriptural and Profane Accounts of the Assyrian Monarchy*, (London, 1818), p. 16.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>102</sup> John Kenrick, Review Article on : 1. *Römische Geschichte* von B.G. Niebuhr, 2 Theile, Berlin, 1811. 2. *The Roman History*. By G.B. [B.G.] Niebuhr. Translated from the German, by F.A. Walter, Esq. F.R.S.L.. 2 vols, London. 1827. 3. *The History of Rome*. By B.G. Niebuhr. Translated by Julius Charles Hare, M.A. and Connop Thirlwall, M.A., Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge. Vol. 1. London. 1828 [From the Second Edition of the German]. 4. *Römische Geschichte* von B.G. Niebuhr. Erster Theil. dritte, vermehrte

meant that the writing of ancient history was unsatisfactory even when dealing with those periods which most closely resembled modern times. Such methods were even less acceptable when the writer came to interpret those 'obscure and mythic ages' whose true history can never be elicited 'by those processes which we apply to modern times'.<sup>103</sup>

There was, he insisted, not a single work in the English language which understood the real relationship between mythology and history. Writers who wished to be 'popular and practical' left out those poetical and supernatural elements from ancient fable and presented the 'vapid residuum as history'. Others incorporated everything into 'religious mystery and dogma', and many had become convinced that attempting to glean fact from fable was useless and the only recourse was to abandon myth to the poets who had created it.<sup>104</sup> With great eloquence, Kenrick expressed his own view on the question of myth and history. The gloom which hung over mythic times, he wrote, was not an

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und verbesserte, Ausgabe. Berlin, 1828. 5. *A Vindication of Niebuhr's History of Rome from the Charges of the Quarterly Review*. By Julius Hare, M.A. London. 1829, *WR*, vol 11, 1829, p. 353. The review article runs from p. 353 to p. 388.

In 1846 another article by Kenrick on Niebuhr was published, in which Kenrick challenged Niebuhr's and T.B. Macaulay's assumptions about the poetical origins of the early history of Rome and claims that they produced no evidence to show that there existed any ballad poetry among the Romans. See John Kenrick 'The Poetical Element of Roman History', Review Article on 1. *The History of Rome, from the first Punic War to the Death of Constantine*. By B.G. Niebuhr. In a series of Lectures, including an Introductory course on the Sources and Study of Roman History. Edited by Leonhard Schmitz, Ph.D. Vol 1, forming the fourth volume of the entire History. London. 1844. Vol. 11. *ibid.* 2. *Lays of Ancient Rome*. By T.B. Macaulay, Esq. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1846, *PR*, vol 2, 1846, pp.322-337. See esp., p. 327. See also notes taken by G.W. Wood at Manchester College in 1842 of lectures on early Roman history by John Kenrick. They may be found in the Unitarian Collection held by John Rylands University Library of Manchester. From p. 28 the notes outline Niebuhr's and Macaulay's arguments defending the existence of early Roman ballad poetry. Kenrick's view is that if there had been such a tradition it would have been recorded by Roman writers. He told his students that no Roman author 'ever saw any thing of the lays out of which their history was formed'. Quoted on page 37 of these notes. For a view of Niebuhr's theory and the criticism it drew, see Renate Bridenthal, 'Was there a Roman Homer? Niebuhr's Thesis and its Critics', *HT*, vol. 11, 1972, pp. 193-213.

<sup>103</sup> John Kenrick, 'Niebuhr's History of Rome', p. 354.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*



'Egyptian darkness' but a twilight such as the one to which the observer is suddenly transported from the brightness of day. Gradually, he learns to distinguish

the forms and larger outlines of things, even if their colour be undefined and their minuter parts be undiscernible<sup>105</sup>

The historian must peer through the haze to make out the outlines of the truth behind the veil of mythic embellishment.

His task was to identify from the myth what had been the historical circumstances which produced it. Regarding the travels of the Greek hero Hercules, to the Western Mediterranean, for example, the older writers gave his journey a 'purely mythic air'. For them, Hercules' objective was to carry off the oxen of Geryones, and to achieve his goal he crossed the sea in the golden cup of the sun. He returned by way of the Pyrenees and the Graian Alps and en route gave origin to the Celtic nation. Another version, copied by Sallust into his *Jugurthine War*, saw Hercules at the head of an army of various nations which finally dispersed and took possession of Africa. This narrative, however, Kenrick believed, was constructed in a later age when Hercules was identified with divinities of Upper Asia. The most historical version came from the Greek writer Diodorus, who recorded that Hercules sailed from Crete with a large fleet, destroyed cities in Egypt and Libya, established his Pillars at Abyla and Calpe, then sailed to Iberia where he defeated Chrysaor of the golden sword.<sup>106</sup> This

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> John Kenrick, *Phoenicia* (London, 1855), p. 122.

was, according to Kenrick, an application to the Greek mythic hero of the historical fact of the establishment of the worship of the Phœnician Hercules on the southern coast of Spain.<sup>107</sup> Thus an analysis which eliminated those versions which were improbable for one reason or another and which incorporated both myth and history was rewarded with at least some idea of what truly lay behind the story of the mythical Hercules' western travels.

Kenrick's ideas about the relationship between the mythical and the historical were refined and consolidated in 1845 and 1846. It was during those two years that he published reviews of works by K.O. Müller,<sup>108</sup> and George Grote (1794-1871), the acclaimed historian of ancient Greece.<sup>109</sup> The year 1846 also marked the publication of Kenrick's own work *Primæval History*,<sup>110</sup> in which he developed further the theme of history and myth. Kenrick's reviews of Müller and Grote served to outline clearly his own mature approach to an opinion about the contribution of myth to history from which he had never wavered since 1816. They also reveal the similarities and differences between Kenrick, Müller and Grote in the approach to the subject.

With regard to Müller, Kenrick pointed out that he had drawn together many of the ideas of his predecessors, including Heyne, on the nature of myth

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>108</sup> John Kenrick, 'Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology', Review Article on *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology*. By K.O. Müller. Translated from the German by John Leitch. London. 1844, *PR*, vol. 1, 1845, pp. 335-355. Müller's first name is spelt sometimes with the 'C', but more often with a 'K'. I have used 'K' here throughout.

<sup>109</sup> John Kenrick, 'Grote's History of Greece', Review Article of *A History of Greece. 1. Legendary Greece. 2. Grecian History to the Reign of Peisistratus at Athens*. By George Grote, Esq. 2 Vols, *CR*, vol 2, August 1846, pp. 449-461. Kenrick's second review, on the next part of Grote's work to be published, volumes three and four, carried the same title 'Grote's History of Greece', and appeared in *CR*, vol.4, January 1848, pp. 1-16. The third review article on 'Grote's History of Greece', this time covering volumes five, six, seven and eight, was published in *CR*, vol. 6, October 1850, pp. 581-596.

<sup>110</sup> John Kenrick, *Primæval History* (London, 1846).

and its significance to historical development.<sup>111</sup> It was therefore not surprising that Kenrick approved in many respects of Müller's perspectives on history and myth, which also saw them as complementary to one another. Müller had pointed out that historians knew the language, the land and the history of Greece, its religion and civil institutions, and had observed that 'mythology often speaks of their origin and constitution'.<sup>112</sup> Accordingly, mythic materials were not isolated from other memorials of antiquity, but 'pass into each other at the boundary, and stand in relation of constant transition'. Documents, he added, which had been purely historical also spoke of the same circumstances mentioned in myth, and 'ideas expressed by mythology, as, in like manner, reproduced by the ancient philosophers'.<sup>113</sup> In the introductory section to the review article, Kenrick emphasised in similar vein that dark as the mythical period was it was nevertheless certain that 'it contains the elements of the historical'.<sup>114</sup> He wrote that although scholars had the earliest literary productions of ancient Greece, the Homeric poems, even by this time the Greek national character had been distinctly formed. The historian had to go far back beyond Homer to discover the traditions of an earlier time which myth might serve to illustrate.

Although Müller perceived myth and history in close interaction, he did, however, indicate a measure of separation between the historical and the mythic period during which 'the great mass of the mythen must have had their origin...and

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<sup>111</sup> Kenrick, 'System of Mythology', pp. 341-342.

<sup>112</sup> K.O. Müller, *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> Kenrick, 'System of Mythology', p. 336.

sprang up at the time of which in general they treat'.<sup>115</sup> Müller believed that there was a unique, poetic age in the Greek past during which myth was formed. Mythic expression was a combination of the *Ideal*, which was a mixture of thought, feeling and poetic fancy, and the *Real*, consisting of historical fact. To separate the two was impossible, for there was no criteria to identify the *Ideal*, either than to define it as invention, or idea. As to that which was possible, or factual, it could not always be termed the *Real*, for

even the drapery which clothes the imaginary,  
might, from accident or internal necessity, keep  
within the bounds of the possible<sup>116</sup>

We may only see the facts and circumstances contained in the myth  
as in a concave mirror, from whose configuration we  
must discover, by calculation, the original form of  
the distorted image it presents<sup>117</sup>

Such a form of mythic expression, which bound together in complex ways the real and the poetic, could only have been cultivated during a '*particular epoch* in the civilisation of a people'.<sup>118</sup> This mode, Müller wrote, of blending together fact and idea could not take place at a time when men were accustomed to separating speculation and the results of experience. Rather, the Greek mythic

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<sup>115</sup> Müller, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>116</sup> Müller, *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology*, p.233.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

age was one of poetry and expression and its intellectual treasures were handed down in a 'certain degree of completeness'.<sup>119</sup>

This idea of a separate, unique poetic age which had been characterised by the emergence of myth was, according to Kenrick, misleading. His view was that we should not speak of a '*mythic age*...as if it had a definite chronology, a beginning and an end in time'.<sup>120</sup> It was only when the historical causes have become obscured by length of time 'that the mind seeks and devises mythic explanations'.<sup>121</sup> The 'age of myth', he wrote, had merely 'subjective limits', and began 'where historic certainty ceases for the individual or the community.'<sup>122</sup> There could not be a definite boundary where history ends and myth begins which was the same in all cases, for the implication was that the length of the individual or collective memory, being subjective, varied according to specific circumstances. Each community was therefore historically unique with regard to the creation and understanding of its own mythology. Consequently, in relation to the question of a clearly defined mythic age, Kenrick rejected Müller's contention with a typically Unitarian historical explanation. It also emerged as a solution, however, which turned out to be at ease conceptually with ideas of change, community and uniqueness, themes which were consistent with Romantic thought.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>120</sup> Kenrick, 'System of Mythology', pp. 352-353.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

George Grote's idea of a boundary between the ages of myth and history was much more definite than Müller's.<sup>123</sup> Grote identified the mythic age with a specific period, the 'childhood' of the race, during which the Greek myths represented a complete form of consciousness and belief for a people living in the age of 'historical faith', which he distinguished from the later age of 'historical reason'.<sup>124</sup> Grote wrote that it was in this early state of the Greek mind, 'stimulating so forcibly the imagination and the feelings, and acting through them upon the belief', that the great body of mythology was formed.<sup>125</sup> These myths constituted the 'entire intellectual stock' of that age' and could not be understood 'except with reference to the system of conceptions and belief of the ages in which they arose'.<sup>126</sup> We must, therefore, he wrote, try to identify with the state of mind of the mythopœic age. This would not be easy, for we would have to regard poetic fancies not simply as realities, but as the governing realities of the Greek mental system of the time. We would have to imagine 'something analogous to our own childhood'.<sup>127</sup>

Because Grote had specified the age of Greek myth as the nation's childhood in which a particular imaginative, fanciful and creative state of mind had manifested itself, he could not, therefore, see any possible linkages between

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<sup>123</sup> George Grote's work, *History of Greece*, 12 vols (London 1846-1856), was the single most important contribution to the study of ancient Greece to be published in the nineteenth century. The extent of its influence is difficult to underestimate and after the 1840s every aspiring classicist had to consider Grote's work in relation to his own. Grote was a contradictory character in intellectual terms. On the one hand he was an empiricist, a rationalist in religion and a political radical of the Benthamite Utilitarian cast whose roots lay within the Enlightenment. On the other he was a keen scholar of German Romanticism and Idealism. See Frank Turner *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, Conn., 1981), pp. 86-96. See also Arnaldo Momigliano, *George Grote and the Study of Greek History, An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at University College, London* (London, 1952).

<sup>124</sup> Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. 1, p. xiii.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 468.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 461, 460.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 474-475.

the myth of that era and factual history. Grote had set apart the heroic and mythic age of Greece from the historical because, he wrote, 'To confound together these disparate matters is, in my judgement, essentially unphilosophical'.<sup>128</sup> Müller's boundary between myth and history had been rather hazy and indefinite. Grote's was much more clearly defined for in his view the mythic age, permeated by an imaginative process which had created an entire system of belief in the personages and relationships of the gods both to themselves and to humans, contained nothing which could be deemed historical. Grote contended that he could not draw back the curtain to reveal the historical picture simply because the curtain was the picture. He was convinced that 'the curtain conceals nothing behind, and cannot by any ingenuity be withdrawn'.<sup>129</sup> Thus for Grote the age of myth was an age of childlike imagination, the creations of which had helped the Greeks define the terms of their own existence and therefore it had no bearing on any analysis of the historical ages which followed.

George Grote's creation of an impassable gulf between myth and history in his famous *History of Greece*, which was published between 1846 and 1856, did not impress Kenrick, the reviewer of the first volume containing the section on legendary Greece. In accordance with his very definite views on the interaction of history and myth, Kenrick rejected Grote's method. In Kenrick's opinion the other historian's approach was contradictory because, while on the one hand Grote related in this first section of the work the legends as illustrative of the faith,

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. xii. The whole of the first part of the history was devoted exclusively to 'Legendary Greece' and nothing else. It was, as Turner commented, 'a learned polemic against the derivation of alleged historical fact from the evidence provided by the Greek myths'. See Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 87.

<sup>129</sup> Grote, *History of Greece* vol. 1, p. xiii.

manners and institutions of the people who believed them, he nevertheless 'makes no attempt to extract any history, general or particular, from these legends'.<sup>130</sup>

Kenrick noted that Grote, having rejected also the possibility of any attempts to separate the fictitious from the historical, was then left with a mass of tales and legends which, true or otherwise, nevertheless represent the Greeks' faith in them. Grote could not ignore these myths, so he therefore dealt with them according to his estimate of their worth to history and consequently isolated them. Kenrick's comment was that 'He most carefully abstains from drawing the smallest inferences as to historical facts'.<sup>131</sup> Apart from anything else, wrote Kenrick, from a practical perspective the volumes Grote has published will not be popular, for by declaring the irrelevance of the mythical age to history he has ensured that

Few persons will be inclined to read some hundred pages, of which they are impressively warned not to believe a word. In his desire to avoid the common error of deducing special history from mythic legend, he resolutely *ignores* every thing respecting the ante-Hellenic inhabitants of Hellas<sup>132</sup>

Despite his criticism of this particular aspect of Grote's work, however, Kenrick and Grote had in common one crucial element in their thought. They both located the creative origins of myth in the human imagination. Frank Turner

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<sup>130</sup> Kenrick, 'Grote's History of Greece', p. 451.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 461.



has correctly identified two features of Grote's thought which run contrary to his rationalist Utilitarian sensibilities for Grote, it ought to be remembered, was a philosophic radical and a rationalist in religion. These two aspects of Grote's thought were firstly, his contention that the creation of myth was characteristic of the imaginative nature of the Greek race in its childhood state and secondly, his identification of the origin of myth in the imagination. Both of them place Grote in the Romantic mould rather than in that of the Utilitarian. The Romantics, according to Duncan Forbes, saw a great gulf between the notional age of 'childhood' and imagination and the age of 'manhood' and reason.<sup>133</sup> The two were perceived not as different in terms of degree, of more or less reason or imagination, but almost as different states of being. This is how Grote saw them, for in his history there was no place whatsoever for the creative, childhood age of myth.

With regard to the second point, Grote's appreciation of the role of imagination in the creation of myth, Turner cites that strain of associationist and rationalist psychology which accepted a theory of imagination derived from emotion and feeling, a theme eloquently expressed by John Stuart Mill.<sup>134</sup> It was a theory which managed to adapt the outlines of empiricist philosophy to accommodate imagination and fanciful creation.<sup>135</sup> Turner contends that the

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<sup>133</sup> Duncan Forbes, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 29-30.

<sup>134</sup> Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 96. Turner quotes here John Stuart Mill's description of the associationist idea of imagination in relation to poetry: 'At the centre of each group of thoughts or images will be found a feeling; and the thoughts or images are only there because the feeling was there. All the combinations which the mind puts together, all the pictures which it paints, the Wholes which imagination constructs out of the materials supplied by Fancy, will be indebted to some dominant *feeling*, not as in other natures to a dominant *thought*, for their unity and consistency of character – for what distinguishes them from inconsistencies'.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

theory formed the background for Grote's ideas about the nature of the imaginative process which brought about the mythopoeic age in ancient Greece.

<sup>136</sup> Turner is correct in this, for the associative imagination is fundamentally *synthetic* in its process and presents its objective in a complete whole, in this case a whole system of belief.

This essentially Romantic notion about the ability of imagination to create from disparate feelings, ideas and sensations what was finally a complete 'whole' or a 'single, unified particular' was described as 'mental chemistry' by Mill. <sup>137</sup> It was derived from the doctrine of *coalescence*, the idea that there could be a synthesis of emotions and the perceptions of sense to forge 'an entirely new and irreducible whole'. <sup>138</sup> This doctrine had been presented in the later eighteenth century by associationist thinkers such as David Hartley and Joseph Priestley, not only in relation to language <sup>139</sup> but also with regard to the formation of a complete and unalterable set of moral criteria. <sup>140</sup>

Associationist concepts, their interaction with imagination and the results of this were evident in the work of both Grote and Kenrick. Grote emphasised that the ancient Greeks required 'some connecting theory to interpret and regularise the phænomena before them'. Such a theory was supplied by the 'spontaneous inspirations of an early fancy' and the result was that most important characteristic of the Homeric Greeks, their ability to 'construe

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), p.118. I am indebted to Bate for his descriptions of this form of thought, for they were invaluable in identifying John Kenrick's concept of the creation and understanding of the role of myth in history.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>140</sup> See chapter two, above.

the phænomena which interested them into manifestations of design'.<sup>141</sup> He added that 'which to us is...the mere creation of an exuberant fancy, was to the Greek genuine and venerated reality'.<sup>142</sup> Instead of a sun which we now know as subject to astronomical laws, the ancient Greek saw the great God Heliôs mounting his chariot in the east by morning, reaching the height of heaven at midday and by evening arriving in the west, in need of rest.<sup>143</sup>

John Kenrick's idea of the formation of imaginative concepts through the process of associationism was very similar and appears to have been initiated during an early period in his life. In an essay written in 1808 at Glasgow, he wrote that

a connection has been traced between thoughts  
apparently most dissimilar, and the wild flights of  
imagination have been shown to be as much regulated  
by fixed laws, as the most sober processes of judgement  
and reasoning<sup>144</sup>

This early statement of the imagination as an end product of the workings of the associative processes on disparate ideas was most likely derived from the influence of the Scottish school of philosophy, whose precepts Kenrick would have most certainly encountered during his studies at Glasgow in the years 1807-1810. Due to a greater stress upon the importance of the innate in the formation of ideas, the Scottish philosophers, particularly Thomas Reid (1710-

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<sup>141</sup> Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. 1, p. 462.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 466.

<sup>144</sup> John Kenrick 'Illustrations of the Origin of the Passions from the Doctrine of the Association of Ideas', 29 December, 1808, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.50 (d), p. 2.

1796) and Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) avoided the extremes of some English associationists. For the Scottish philosophers the contents of the mind were not formed entirely from the repetitions and associations of sense experience, rather they believed that the mind had an innate capacity to guide what experience brought to it.<sup>145</sup>

In *Primæval History*, published in 1846, however, Kenrick's mode of expression on this subject was more sophisticated. He applied his own interpretation of the creative idea to the relationship between history and myth, writing of the process which had resulted in the creation of myths that

Imagination itself...has its laws; it requires a motive for its exertion, and the definite form which its productions assume, implies a cause which has given them this shape, rather than any other....What gives definite form to the legend thus created is something present to the senses, or permanent in the feelings of those who produce or receive it. <sup>146</sup>

It was the power of emotions such as curiosity, national pride and religious feeling which awakened the 'activity of this faculty', and however much the legend which resulted from it appeared real due to its definite form and vividness, it was still essentially imaginative.<sup>147</sup> In this much later passage were present all the elements which suggest that Kenrick was close to the same philosophical 'school' as Grote and Mill.

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<sup>145</sup> Bate, *Classic to Romantic*, pp. 101 – 102. Other implications for John Kenrick's thought of this position of the Scottish philosophers are discussed in chapter seven, below.

<sup>146</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 65.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

The idea that the definite shape of the myth, an end product of human imagination, was derived from emotion, sense or feeling and created by the laws of a specific process is consistent with the associationist answer to the mystery of the creative process. Clearly, Kenrick's description of the creation of myth was derived from one of the various perspectives on empiricism which had found their own solutions to the problem of feeling and imagination and which had established their own home grown forms of 'Romanticism'.<sup>148</sup> For him the process which formed the imaginative from the empirical represented a philosophical frame of mind which complemented the idea of the interactive relationship between myth and history.

Grote's reason for the rejection of any historical element in this period was related to his opinion of the Greeks as being, just like an individual, at a particular stage in their intellectual development, that being childhood. This idea, according to Forbes' definition, was a theme characteristic of Romanticism. Notably, the concept of the mental development of a people over time was one which also appeared in John Kenrick's thought. In his review of K.O. Müller, Kenrick wrote of myth that the age of its production usually preceded that of recorded history. It was an ancient language, the memorial of the times in which it originated and the only means whereby we could conceive the character of the Greeks or the relation in which this age stood to the historical. It opened up to us

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<sup>148</sup> Bate, *Classic to Romantic*, p. 118. Bate notes that this doctrine, or form of expression, was distinctively British and it was not until after the first quarter of the nineteenth century that there was any evidence that it had made an appearance in European Romantic criticism.

a glimpse of an early world 'when religion and philosophy lay yet indiscriminated in the mind, and fancy was not controlled by reason'.<sup>149</sup>

With regard to this essentially Romantic notion, in which the ages of myth and reason were separate, there was not much difference between Kenrick and Grote. Both saw the mythic age as one not yet governed by man's rational capacities. In John Kenrick, however the importance of the role of the historical and the search for the primary source which had been instilled in him by Unitarian biblical criticism had also strengthened the idea of the interaction between history and myth. The result was that while Müller and Grote were primarily concerned with the historical significance of the mental state of the Greeks during that particular period in which they created their myths, John Kenrick historicised the myths themselves. His approach had been formed and refined by a complex interaction between the importance of the primary historical source to Unitarian biblical criticism, the ideas of Heyne, and influences from both the Scottish philosophers and English Romanticism.

All these ideas in Kenrick's mind concurred with the second important proposition of Heyne, that myths had local origins and ought to be interpreted in relation to the time and circumstances in which they appeared.<sup>150</sup> It was this contention around which other key elements of Kenrick's 1816 essay had been constructed. The idea also appeared later, in K.O. Müller, who wrote that myths

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<sup>149</sup> John Kenrick, 'System of Mythology' p. 336. See also John Kenrick, *The Egypt of Herodotus* (London, 1941), in which Kenrick wrote that 'the imagination and passions are developed at an earlier stage in the progress of men than the reason and the judgement'. Quoted at p. i.

<sup>150</sup> Heyne wrote that 'The myths of single peoples...have manifested themselves each in a separate way'. He also emphasised that myths should be studied 'in accordance with the thinking of the times'. See again the extract from Heyne's *Interpretation of the Language of Myths*, in Feldman and Richardson, *Rise of Modern Mythology*, p. 220. On the later views of Müller, on the subject of the origins of myth, see *Introduction to a Scientific System of Mythology*, pp. 46, 166, 68-71.

sprang from oral tradition and from local regions and from this may be determined their age and relationship to history. Kenrick, however, had been familiar with the idea of the localised origins of myth through his reading of Heyne and had begun to develop such thoughts a decade before Müller's work appeared.

As we know, during the earliest period of his intellectual life, when Kenrick became familiar with Heyne's ideas, he had already been schooled in the Unitarian approach to biblical criticism which was firmly anchored to a strictly historical interpretation. A concern with the original context applied not only to events themselves, but also to those who wrote the accounts. Consequently it would be natural for Kenrick to conceive of the origins of myth, being conjoined with history in terms of its interpretation, in a similar way. His mind was intent on the discovery of original, uncorrupted sources, whether biblical or classical, which would reveal not a later version of the narrative or one which was a composite of several, but the real historical truth, or at least the closest the historian could approach it.

In his essay of 1816 Kenrick set out a list of five principles by which the critic should be guided in his investigations into the origins of the gods who came after Jupiter. Firstly, the place to which Greek tradition referred the birth of any of the gods, must be considered as that in which his or her worship was first formed, or from which it spread itself over Greece. Secondly, the domestic traditions of such a place were the decisive evidence as to whether the myth had originated there or was foreign to it. Thirdly, the critic should be very cautious in

admitting that the worship of a divinity had been imported into Greece, unless from countries which had had considerable intercourse with it, by conquest, colonisation, commerce or geographical proximity. It ought to be remembered too, that the original character of a god was often changed by the people by whom he or she was worshipped or altered with regard to other local peculiarities. Lastly, the critic should be mindful that the Greek gods were never incorporated originally in the system they now exhibited, but had been formed into these various connections in a period after the first rise of their worship. <sup>151</sup>

These early ideas that the origins of myth were localised, and that the method of discovering them was to ascend upwards to the source remained a persistent theme. His faith in the local origins of myth emerged clearly in an article by Kenrick published in 1833 in the *Philological Museum*, <sup>152</sup> the short-lived journal edited by the two Germanophiles Julius Charles Hare (1795-1855) and Connop Thirlwall (1797-1875). <sup>153</sup> The content of this intensive and learned study of the origins and development of ancient language <sup>154</sup> also contained ideas he had already consolidated on the origins of myth. The complex pattern of the formation of myth was unravelled by his understanding of the movements, separations, isolations, connections and diffusions of various ancient peoples

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<sup>151</sup> Kenrick, 'Historical Principles', p. 26.

<sup>152</sup> John Kenrick, 'On the Kings of Attica Before Theseus', *PM*, vol. 2, 1833, pp. 344-372.

<sup>153</sup> Conscious of the fact that a large amount of original work in the classics was being initiated in Germany in this period, J.C. Hare wrote that the *Philological Museum* had been designed to inspire British scholars to greater heights of attainment in the field. It would contain illustrations of the language, literature, philosophy, history, manners, institutions, mythology and religion of Greece and Rome. There would be occasional articles on biblical criticism and also dissertations on oriental literature 'when they are not, as such things mostly are, either too heavy or too light'. See J.C. Hare's preface, *PM*, vol. 1 1832, p. iv. Despite their ambitions for the *Philological Museum*, Hare and Thirlwall presided over only two volumes, which were published in 1832 and 1833.

<sup>154</sup> See chapter six, below.



and tribes, their gods and their forms of worship. The analysis depended upon a grasp of the earliest, and therefore the most uncorrupted, sources of evidence about the mythic characters and the circumstances surrounding their creation and worship.

One good example of this method was the narrative of Niobe, the supposed daughter of Tantalus and wife of King Amphion of Thebes, whose six children were slaughtered by the twin deities Apollo and Artemis. Kenrick wrote that traces of the early diffusion of the Asiatic religion, of which Sipylus was the centre, and where the legends of Tantalus and Niobe had been connected with the worship of the gods, had been found in other parts of Greece. Indeed, Niobe appeared in the oldest legends of Sicyon and Ægialeia. In this connection, however, the historian should not be misled into thinking that Niobe was the daughter of Phoroneus, for there are other things to be taken into account in the Asiatic origin of the fable. Apis, Niobe's brother, is said to have been murdered by Telchin. The Telchines, however, belonged to the worship of the mother of the Gods, and they were the same [people] as the Idæi Dactyli of Crete and Phrygia.<sup>155</sup> This illustrates Kenrick's method of juxtaposing historical, ethnological and local mythical elements in order to clarify the truth about the story of Niobe and her tragedy.

Similarly, the idea of locality as a crucial factor appears in an article published in the previous year in the same journal, in which Kenrick wrote of his researches into the names of the ante-Hellenic peoples of Greece.<sup>156</sup> Here, he

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<sup>155</sup> Kenrick, 'Kings of Attica', p 355.

<sup>156</sup> John Kenrick, 'On the Names of the Antehellenic Inhabitants of Greece, *PM*, vol. 1, 1832, pp. 609-627.

reached back to the linguistic and ethnological sources which provided evidence to the identities of those very early Greek peoples whose mythology blossomed in the distant past. His view was that although their myths were locally originated to a very great degree, these ancient narratives had been subsequently incorporated into the later system of mythology and consequently could no longer be clearly defined. Latterly then, the myths of the ante-hellenic tribes could only form part of the 'mythological substratum' of this distant age.

A dozen years later when he reviewed Müller's work, which had also been influenced by Heyne and others,<sup>157</sup> it was clear that Kenrick shared with the German his thoughts on the 'locality and separateness of origin'<sup>158</sup> of ancient myths. His conclusion on Müller's work was that it would gradually infuse more correct opinions on a subject which had hitherto been given over to 'sciolism, fancy, and theological prejudice'.<sup>159</sup> Kenrick agreed with Müller that myths were created by single tribes and families, by special customs and religious rites in confined areas. The gods were eventually brought together by selection and combination from a number of different worships. All this was harmonised by poets, giving an 'artificial unity' to the legends, and 'bringing into mutual relation and combined action a number of personages, who had no original connection with one another'.<sup>160</sup> It was the scholar's duty to discover the true myth from its local origins, for

The local mythus is not...a fragment of the more

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<sup>157</sup> Kenrick, 'System of Mythology', pp. 341-342.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 348.

comprehensive, but the nucleus around which it has  
gradually gathered.<sup>161</sup>

Müller's ideas about the local origins of myth reflected similar themes which had appeared in Kenrick's early essay of 1816. The historian ought not only to seek out the origins, these 'nuclei' of the myths, but should also trace the development which takes place around them

downwards, through their successive enlargements.

and intermixtures, by the aid of historical facts, respecting the progress of civilisation, literature and the arts, among the people by whom these fables were believed.<sup>162</sup>

This was the second part of Kenrick's stated method, which he had claimed as original in 1816. The first part encouraged the search 'upwards' for the original source.<sup>163</sup> Here, however, there was a change of dynamic towards the idea of development related to the myth, which originated in a specific, local area which was, by implication, unique. Consequently, the form and nature of development which involved the relationship between a people's mythology and their civilisation, literature and the arts, were also unique. .

The same idea appeared in an expanded form thirty years later in Kenrick's *Primæval History*, in which he wrote that mythology was of great use to the historian, for it was a product of the national rather than the individual mind which gave

a vivid image of national character. Religious and

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>162</sup> Kenrick, 'Historical Principles', p. 5.

<sup>163</sup> See note 84, above.

moral feeling, knowledge, taste, the predominance of plastic or reflective power among the intellectual faculties, in ages from which no literary works have descended to us, may all be traced in the creations of mythology <sup>164</sup>

Mythology, then, was much more than a collection of fantastic tales. It interacted with many other aspects of the life of a culture which was unique in relation to others because the original source of its legendary past lay in the locality of a specific people or nation. It functioned as a binding factor in the collective consciousness of a people and, in the case of Greece, was interwoven with all its finest poetry and was 'essential to the interpretation of its art'. <sup>165</sup>

All these themes conformed with the idea of the organic development of a people or nation on its own terms in an *internal* sense. In this view the centre of gravity of development is within the culture itself and owes nothing to any universal precepts or systematic principles which are external to the boundaries of its own existence. Kenrick's idea of myth as having a unique form of input in cultural terms was similar to that of J.G. Herder, whose emphasis on the national character of myth reversed the preference of Enlightenment scholars to regard myth as having universal significance. Like Herder, Kenrick believed that the mythology of a people, which was linked to its own domestic locality, was an element of cultural growth which should be understood alongside others. It was also an important contributory factor in the formation and development of a

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<sup>164</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 92.

<sup>165</sup> Kenrick, 'System of Mythology', p. 336.

national consciousness, for these were the times during which 'states received their form, and nations their character'.<sup>166</sup>

This historicist theme of national identity was repeated many times in Kenrick's articles and histories and was linked to other Romantic concepts. One most potent example was the number of comments in this vein on the subject of the Jewish people. Kenrick noted their own strengths and weaknesses and the development of their nation along the lines of any other ancient culture, and the ideas of national character, cohesion and belief formed an integral part of the discussion. In an article entitled 'The Destruction of the Jewish State', published in 1845,<sup>167</sup> he wrote that the supernatural origin of the religion of the Jews by no means implied that their history was unlike that of any other nation or that 'national character was formed by any other than natural influences'.<sup>168</sup> Also, in the ancient nation even crimes of fanaticism and bigotry, which were less profitable than those which spring from selfishness 'indicate elements of national character capable of high results'.<sup>169</sup>

Time also had its role to play in the creation of a people's unique identity, for in the case of the Jews an old, hereditary national character had formed under the influence of the centuries without which 'the national existence must have terminated centuries before'.<sup>170</sup> Having been slowly matured in this way, 'A national character...cannot be instantly changed'.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Kenrick, 'Niebuhr's History of Rome', p. 354.

<sup>167</sup> John Kenrick, 'The Destruction of the Jewish State', *CR*, New Series, vol., 1845, pp. 471-477.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 474.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

Although difficult to define with respect to art, for there are no works to indicate the nature of the Jewish 'national character', there is a great literature from which we learn about 'the formation of the character' and the influence of their religion in 'penetrating and modifying the whole national mind'.<sup>172</sup> This mind was also interesting in relation to its conceptions of the Messiah, for there was a 'national belief respecting the person and office of the Messiah'.<sup>173</sup> In a later article, Kenrick pointed out the strength of the Jewish 'national feeling' and the resort of the Jews to 'national sanctuary, by laws making them in every respect a peculiar people', whose 'national depravity was also without parallel'.<sup>174</sup> The Jewish nation was, consequently, like a unique individual with character, life, beliefs, feelings, faults and a mind of its own.

The same ideas featured frequently in different contexts in Kenrick's many other reviews and articles. Of nations in general, he commented upon a 'most important element', which was 'the influence of the national religion on the national mind',<sup>175</sup> which, like an individual, could come to its own 'verdict'.<sup>176</sup> He criticised historians who omitted to record 'many things which are essential to a complete view of the national character', for it was the finer influences of literature 'of which national character is the result'.<sup>177</sup> The themes of development and corruption also made their re-appearance outwith his studies

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<sup>172</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 161.

<sup>173</sup> Kenrick, 'Jewish Conceptions of the Messiah', p. 245.

<sup>174</sup> John Kenrick, 'Jewish Coins and Hebrew Palæography', Review Article of *History of Jewish Coinage and of Money in the Old and New Testament*, by Frederic W. Madden, London. 1864, *TR*, vol. 5, April 1868, p. 257.

<sup>175</sup> Kenrick, 'Grote's History of Greece', p. 453.

<sup>176</sup> John Kenrick, 'Froude's History of England', Review Article of *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth*, by James Anthony Froude, Late Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, 2 vols., London - John W. Parker and Son, 1856, *CR*, vol. 12, July 1856, p. 386.

<sup>177</sup> Kenrick, 'Grote's History of Greece', pp. 449, 450.

on the Jewish state. With regard to the history of Rome, Kenrick questioned the chronology which made certain early Roman figures 'representative of certain periods and phases of national development'.<sup>178</sup> Later, at the beginning of the empire, Kenrick noted that under the reign of Augustus the 'national character' had been 'corrupted', and it was impossible that the new ruler should not fear a resurgence of republican feeling.<sup>179</sup>

There are other passages in Kenrick's work which reflect the idea of national cohesion emanating from language,<sup>180</sup> historical traditions and forms of religion founded upon the myths which had local origins. His ideas on what brought about the sense of community within a nation were very like that of Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren (1760-1842), who was Kenrick's teacher of history at Göttingen during his study trip to Germany in 1819-1820. Heeren believed that the key to understanding the development of national character was to give precedence to the effect on cohesion of 'external marks' of language and certain institutions sanctioned by religion'.<sup>181</sup> Subsequently, Kenrick's idea of what formed a national character was an interaction of 'the reason, imagination and affections of man',<sup>182</sup> which in turn produced a 'general conformity of mental conception and vocal expression, characterising the whole nation'.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> John Kenrick, 'Regal Rome', Review Article of *Regal Rome, an Introduction to Roman History*, by Francis W. Newman, Professor of Latin in University College, London. 1852, *PR*, vol. 8, 1852, p. 301.

<sup>179</sup> John Kenrick, 'Merivale's History of the Romans', Review Article of *History of the Romans Under the Empire*, by Charles Merivale, Late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, vols. 1 and 2, 1850; vol. 3, 1851; vols. 4 and 5, 1856, *CR*, vol. 13, January 1857, p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> See chapter six, below.

<sup>181</sup> A.H.L. Heeren, *Sketch of a Political History of Ancient Greece* (London, 1829), p. 107.

<sup>182</sup> John Kenrick, *Phaenicia*, p. 296.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

Kenrick's expression of the uniqueness and cohesion of each national character formed from the development of interdependent factors was striking in a Romantic sense. The national state of mind, the mental attitude of a people, was moulded to historical conditions created by locally generated myth and its relationship with art, literature and ethics. The national character did not develop due to an artificially created system or one imported from an external source. Myth, religion, language,<sup>184</sup> and other factors which helped to mould these specific characteristics had their roots in unique and concrete historical circumstances. This was a frame of mind which was closely allied with Romantic interpretations of history. It emphasised uniqueness, specific points of origin and a form of cultural development in one nation which clearly differentiated it from the next.

The origins of this element in Kenrick's thought concerning national character, which appeared in the 1840s were the result of not one, but several sources of influence. Firstly, biblical criticism clearly played its part, for the idea of nationhood was the theme of his analysis of the life of the ancient Jewish people, which had to be viewed as any other ancient nation. Secondly, the study of classical myth impressed upon his mind its importance in relation to the development of a nation's culture, art and moral feeling, thus 'national character' was a factor here also.

Thirdly, the German classicist Philipp August Boeckh (1785-1867), who was Professor of Rhetoric and Ancient Literature at Berlin at the time of Kenrick's visit in 1819 to 1820, had published his work *The Public Economy of Athens* just two

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<sup>184</sup> See chapter six, below.



years earlier. In Boeckh's work the Greeks were not seen simply as producers of philosophy, literature and art, but as a nation like all others in the throes of a struggle for economic and military survival. The volume portrayed a people from many aspects in a concrete historical reality rather than one usually perceived to have existed in a golden age of intellectual perfection. Thus Boeckh had illustrated that history itself was now mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of the character of nations. In his memoir of Kenrick, James Martineau wrote that 'No great scholar left upon him [Kenrick] so great an impression as Boeckh',<sup>185</sup> who, according to G.P. Gooch, occupied a position with regard to classical studies similar to that of the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) in the history of modern Europe.<sup>186</sup> Lastly, the work of the philologist Jacob Grimm, who emphasised Teutonic origins and the development of a distinctive German myth, literature and character, was also very likely to have been a factor in the emergence of this particular element in Kenrick's thought.<sup>187</sup> Grimm's ideas about the German past, its tales and traditions, would have appealed to a historian concerned with the influence of myth on the identity of a people.

These ideas of development, interdependence and cohesion led naturally to the concept of a nation as developing organically. In Kenrick's writings there are some striking examples of the organic imagery which was related to the Romantic Age. Like Thomas Arnold,<sup>188</sup> Kenrick regarded classical culture as the zenith of man's intellectual and artistic achievement and therefore wished to

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<sup>185</sup> James Martineau, *In Memoriam : John Kenrick* (London, 1877), p. 13.

<sup>186</sup> G.P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1967), p. 32.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, pp.49-59. See also chapter six, below and the Appendix to this thesis.

<sup>188</sup> Forbes, *Liberal Anglican Idea*, p. 67.

establish whenever possible connections between the end of the ancient world and the beginnings of the modern. When Rome fell, he wrote, it appeared as though there had been a total destruction of the previous civilisation and a return to such chaos that a new creation would be required to initiate another beginning. This, however, was not so for

We shall find the germs of feudalism in the  
tenure of the land, in the decline of the  
empire; we shall see that the codes of law  
which had been deemed most exclusively of  
barbarian growth, have been strongly impregnated  
with the spirit of Roman Law. <sup>189</sup>

Beneath the ruins which had been created by the old and new possessors of the West of Europe 'the seed still lives which in due time is to cover the earth with a more abundant harvest'.<sup>190</sup> There would be a continuation of the cultural mores of ancient times and the 'seeds' of those would survive and flourish with the help of the new Germanic conquerors. The upheavals of the dismemberment of the Roman Empire in the third century AD had created separate states which were like 'slips taken from a blighted and decaying tree'.<sup>191</sup> As such they would have no healthy vitality, '[but] new life was to be infused by the settlement of the Teutonic nations'.<sup>192</sup> Here there is expressed not only the organic concepts of

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<sup>189</sup> John Kenrick, *Introductory Lecture as Professor of History at Manchester New College* (London, 1841), p. 15. This was the fifth in a series of lectures delivered by the professors at the opening of the college in October, 1840.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> John Kenrick, 'The Relation of Coins to History', in *A Selection of Papers on Subjects of Archæology and History Communicated to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society* (London, 1864), p. 109.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

Romanticism, but also the Romantic idea of the primitive strength and vitality of the rude and the barbarous as contrasted with the weakness of a decaying and corrupt civilisation.

There were however, three short passages in Kenrick's work which illustrated more clearly than most his affinity with Romantic perspectives on historical understanding and cultural relativism. He wrote that in the case of history, and also of languages <sup>193</sup> 'Strata are formed from the detritus of other strata, kingdoms from the fragments of empires'. <sup>194</sup> This expression of a cyclical process of historical change, a process of birth, death and decay, was organic. It also understood the wider historical process in terms of single nations in interaction with the greater shifts and movements of the whole.

Kenrick's thoughts on the outlines of historical forms and their interaction may be compared with the ideas of J.C. Hare, whose work *Guesses at Truth* described some perspectives on history which were of a truly Romantic character with regard to historical development. Hare believed that the right way towards the understanding of a past age was firstly, to gain the fullest idea of its peculiar features, and secondly, to 'contemplate it with reference to the place it holds in the history of the world'. <sup>195</sup> The nation is born, has life, dies and decays. The progress of universal history is comprised of the successes and failures of the shifting organisms of nations and the value of what is passed one to another.

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<sup>193</sup> See chapter six, below.

<sup>194</sup> John Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', Review Article of *Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History*. By Christian Charles Josias Bunsen. Two volumes. London. 1854, *CR*, vol 11, September 1855, p. 530.

<sup>195</sup> A.J. and J.C. Hare, *Guesses at Truth* (London, 1866), p. 278.

Within a similar context, another two passages present Kenrick's idea of the life of a nation. He wrote that as time advances, 'a nation, like an individual, has the right to endeavour to prolong its existence'.<sup>196</sup> The concept here of a nation as an individual entity with a life of its own and the will to preserve that life was an organic one. The idea of a people and culture with its own unique, individual path of internal development was even more strongly expressed when Kenrick wrote that

There is no principle in historical philosophy more certain, than that national character, when a people has not been changed by inoculation with a foreign stock, is essentially the same, through all its stages from its germ to its decay.<sup>197</sup>

These organic concepts are of the Romantic Age and they emphasise the uniqueness of peoples and nations relative to one another. The uniqueness of cultures as expressed in this way is a given, because organic thought is fundamentally different from the atomism of the radical English Enlightenment which tends rather towards concepts of general uniformity. Kenrick's perspectives may be compared with those of J.G. Herder, who wrote, in a much more colourful fashion that

Each nation must therefore be considered solely  
*in its place with everything that it is and has .... [in]*  
that great garden in which peoples grew up like plants<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Kenrick, 'Destruction of the Jewish State', p. 475.

<sup>197</sup> John Kenrick, 'The Poetical Element of Roman History', p. 337.

Thus Kenrick shared with Herder the idea that a people or a nation developed organically and maintained throughout its existence a form of uniqueness which differentiated it from others in the most fundamental way.

Most crucial to this way of thinking about the Romantic form of development of nations was an emphasis on the origins of a people or elements of their culture. Without a specific, local and separate origin there could be no sense of uniqueness about the growth of any historical 'organism'. One good example was Kenrick's description of the formation of the Egyptian religion.<sup>199</sup> The warning to the historian here was identical to that previously given to the biblical critic, that no external abstractions or 'systems' should be permitted to distort the unique historical reality of the context within which one sought the truth, whether it concerned the origins of the Egyptian religion or the nature of the primitive Christian faith.

Both, it appeared, had suffered the same fate, of being overlaid with the precepts of Greek philosophy. This attempted harmonisation of Egyptian theology and Greek philosophy, according to Kenrick, was, it seemed, a tendency very pronounced in the later Platonists. It appeared particularly in the work of writers such as Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius, who admitted into their philosophy much of Egyptian and oriental origins and 'such modifications as would adapt them to their purpose of establishing a system'.<sup>200</sup> The writer Iamblichus tried to show how Greek philosophy and Egyptian theology

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<sup>198</sup> J.G. Herder, quoted from *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity* (1793-7), Tenth Collection, in Michael N. Forster (ed.) *Johann Gottfried von Herder: Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge, 2002), p.395.

<sup>199</sup> John Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt Under the Pharaohs*, 2 vols. (London, 1850).

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 354.

were integrated and how in fact from the very beginning the whole Egyptian system 'sets out from one and advances to a plurality; the many again being guided by one'.<sup>201</sup> Thus according to Iamblichus the Egyptian religion was a commonly held general belief which had been adapted subsequently into various diverse forms. Kenrick commented that for the cultivated Greek philosophers, it would have been quite natural to try and refine away the gross conceptions of primitive legends, symbols and rites and 'engraft upon traditional mythology the speculative philosophy of a later age'.<sup>202</sup> Such attempts, however, were fruitless, for the evidence clearly showed that the religion of Egypt was not systematically conceived. In Egypt's distant past there existed no such thing as a system from which worshippers in different localities selected the gods they wished to worship'.<sup>203</sup>

Kenrick's concept of the nature of the origins of the Egyptian religion was identical to the way he saw the origins of myths, as localised and not part of any organised system. Kenrick did not disagree that the Egyptians had their national religion, but it had never been systematised in its early stages. Rather, it had been formed by 'a multitude of religious conceptions'<sup>204</sup> and by this means each local deity was allowed his separate honours. The reason for Kenrick's conclusion was that in their names and visible symbols these gods at first appeared to be distinct and there was usually some particular office assigned to each one. However, a closer examination revealed that sometimes one deity

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 363.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., pp. 364-365.

assumed attributes of another and he concluded that 'a permanent line of demarcation cannot be drawn between them'.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, gods which appeared in most instances as inferior were from time to time given titles of supreme divinity. This, Kenrick believed, was the consequence of their local origins, for to the people of each locality 'their own special god would become the chief object of worship'.<sup>206</sup> Clearly, as with myth, the principle of localism of origins is fundamental to an analysis which concurs with the idea of uniqueness in religious belief.

Not only religion, however, was included in those elements of the Egyptian civilisation which Kenrick considered unique. In an article of 1853<sup>207</sup> Kenrick outlined the gain to research of the Prussian expedition to Egypt in 1842 headed by Richard Lepsius, who was generally regarded at the time as the most eminent Egyptologist in Europe. The expedition had resolved many points on Egyptian chronology and drawings which were made illustrated the interiors of many tombs which had been previously unknown. Also, according to Kenrick, it put 'beyond controversy' the highly civilised nature of ancient Egypt and proved the important point that the arts and ideas of the Egyptians had been the result of growth over centuries. He wrote that 'they are thoroughly indigenous, and bear no analogy to those of other nations'.<sup>208</sup> In addition, Kenrick pointed out that this

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> John Kenrick, 'Lepsius' Letters from Egypt', Review Article of *Letters From Egypt, Ethiopia and the Peninsula of Sinai*. By Dr. Richard Lepsius: Translated by Leonora and Joanna B. Horner. Henry G. Bohn, PR, vol. 9, 1853, pp. 449-467. The article included comments upon another two works of Richard Lepsius: *Über den ersten Aegyptischen Götterkries*. Von R. Lepsius. Berlin. 1851. [On the Egyptian Gods of the First Series], and *Über die Zwölfte Aegyptische Königsdynastie*. Von R. Lepsius. Berlin. 1853. [On the Twelfth Royal Dynasty of Egypt].

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 451.

being the case the Egyptian civilisation was an ideal subject for the study of the development of an ancient people. It provided a 'firm standing point' from which the historian was able to look backwards over the preceding centuries during which 'Egypt had been slowly acquiring the characteristics which these remains of antiquity so distinctly reveal'.<sup>209</sup>

It was also the case that the development of one element of the Egyptian culture would have an effect on another. Religious unity had a bearing on the strong political unity of Egypt from earliest times. This unity, however, was not derived from common belief in a theological system which had been imposed by a superior authority. Rather, it revealed itself in a 'general conformity of mental conception, characterising the whole nation, yet differenced at the same time by local or other influences'.<sup>210</sup>

His idea of the origins of the religion of the ancient nation of Phœnicia was identical to his concept of the roots of Egyptian worship. Phœnician worship also had a 'distinctive national character'.<sup>211</sup> The beginnings of the nation's religious practices were, however, virtually lost in the mists of time. The only accounts of it were probably written eight or nine centuries after the age to which its origins had been attributed. Kenrick pointed out, however, that these works were nevertheless of great value due to the fact that that very little else had survived concerning the religion of this ancient people.<sup>212</sup> It was probable that, as in the case of a treatise of Plutarch on the Egyptian theology, the opinions of different

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt*, p. 364.

<sup>211</sup> Kenrick, *Phœnicia*, 297.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., pp. 289-290.



ages may have been brought together although 'not always in perfect consistency with each other'.<sup>213</sup>

There were, however, alternative sources for writers to consider, and they comprised the documents and memorials in the different cities of Phœnicia. Also available were the records of the temples which had been 'illustrated by the local appellations, and popular histories of the gods, and the mystic rites of their several temples'.<sup>214</sup> Religion, wrote Kenrick, was only a product of the 'reason, imagination and affections of man',<sup>215</sup> and had its roots so far back in societies that its origin was lost. Consequently, all accounts which we have respecting the primary beliefs and worship of heathen nations must be gleaned from tradition and myth, from the names and forms of deities, temple rites, hymns and prayers, the tales of which they were the subject and the etymological significance of their names.

Having discovered something of the religious practices and cultural mores of an ancient people such as the Phœnicians, how then should the historian judge them? The German historian Leopold Ranke denied that there were universal values. All values took on a concrete historical form and were consequently unique, arising from a particular historical situation. It was history, not philosophy, which provided the true guide to values. The historian should try to maintain an impartial position on the forces of history and relate these in

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. Here Kenrick quoted Philo, whom he notes makes special mention of 'documents composed in the secret characters of the Ammuneans ...not intelligible to all'.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

context without imposing upon them his own values or those of his own time.<sup>216</sup>

Among Ranke's primary objectives was to separate the study of the past from the ideas of the present.<sup>217</sup> He also emphasised the autonomous nature of all historical forms and that the value of an epoch was in its own existence and should be seen as valid for its own sake'.<sup>218</sup> The belief that every society had to be seen as a complex of a set of values different from those of other peoples and should be assessed only in terms of their worth within the context from which they had evolved<sup>219</sup> was historicist and a reflection of the nineteenth century idea of history.

Ideas such as these appeared to some extent in Kenrick's work, in his biblical criticism and also in his secular history, confirming once again that the same patterns of thought often extended to both. In his analysis of the 'miracle' of speaking in tongues Kenrick had written of the great danger of error in transferring modern ideas to the mind of St. Paul, and in doing so confusing his idea of the spiritual with ours of the miraculous.<sup>220</sup> Also, with regard to the question whether it was the profligacy and sinfulness of the Jews which brought about the nation's demise, Kenrick's opinion was that 'we must compare them, not with Christians of the present day, but with Heathens of their own'.<sup>221</sup> Here, even in his writings on the Bible, Kenrick was defining the context as essential to

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<sup>216</sup> Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke, *The Theory and Practice of History: Leopold von Ranke* (Indianapolis, 1973), pp. xlvi-xxix.

<sup>217</sup> Gooch, *History and Historians*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>218</sup> Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>219</sup> Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1968), p. 7.

<sup>220</sup> Kenrick, 'The True Nature of the Gift of Tongues', *Biblical Essays*, p. 102.

<sup>221</sup> Kenrick, 'Destruction of the Jewish State', p. 473.

historical understanding and was setting apart the mores of the past from the judgemental standards of his own time.

In his secular histories Kenrick, who believed that myth, which had local origins, contributed to the religious and moral feeling of the people who created it, had a distinctly non-judgemental view of unethical behaviour. In his assessment of the character of Gallienus, an emperor of Rome in the third century AD, Kenrick wrote that 'if he took cruel vengeance on Byzantium, we must remember what were the uses of war in those days'.<sup>222</sup> Similarly, his reaction to the religious practices of ancient Egypt was typically impartial, for he urged that

We must not pronounce that the spectacle which  
would grossly offend our eyes argues a depraved  
heart in those to whom it bore a sacred character.<sup>223</sup>

The criminal practises too, of the Phœnician pirates were distanced from modern ethical judgements, for, as Kenrick wrote, they traded where trade was profitable and used violence to gain their purpose. Their morality, however, was only on a level with their neighbours and indeed 'it was no offence in this age to ask a stranger if he were a pirate'.<sup>224</sup>

The Phœnician religious practices were also explicable as products of their own time. Kenrick noted the abhorrence with which the rites of Moloch were spoken of in scripture, but avoided the use of any judgemental tone himself. Not only did he give an impartial account of child sacrifices to the god Moloch, before

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<sup>222</sup> Kenrick, 'Coins', in *Archaeology and History*, p. 106.

<sup>223</sup> Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1, p. 469.

<sup>224</sup> Kenrick, *Phœnicia*, p. 190.

whose likeness young children were roasted alive, but Kenrick even tries to explain the purpose behind such acts. These regular sacrifices involved only children and they were regarded as 'propitiatory offerings on behalf of their parents'.<sup>225</sup> Kenrick asserted that the motivation of the mothers who brought their offspring to the altars of the god to be burned 'believed themselves to be securing their childrens' eternal happiness, by this sacrifice of natural feeling'.<sup>226</sup> Consequently what would have been considered morally abhorrent in Kenrick's time to the Phœnician mothers was a rational and acceptable practice in terms of their own religious and cultural circumstances. Unlike Ranke, Kenrick never elaborated in any way on his own approach to the moral relativism which is clearly to be found in his thought. Without question, however, he showed an appreciation of time and circumstance and also of the 'otherness' of the unique cultural mores and moral standards of ancient civilisations which were related to these factors.

Clearly, he did not fall into the trap of the historian's 'pathetic fallacy', described by Herbert Butterfield as the practice of abstracting things from the historical context and evaluating them by a system of direct reference to the present.<sup>227</sup> It was historians such as Gibbon and Macaulay whose work revealed the most glaring examples of such a mode of thought. Gibbon's own prejudices, largely centred around his loathing of the fanaticism and superstition of the Christian churches, were responsible for the great flaws in his historical

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>227</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1931), pp. 30-31.

understanding.<sup>228</sup> Macaulay used history as exemplary and established connections in a political sense between past and present for his own purposes.

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Granted, it could be argued that it was perhaps easier to conceptualise the 'otherness' of ancient times than to distance oneself effectively from historical periods which, in Macaulay's mind at least, encroached upon the present context. John Kenrick, however, did not see it that way, and indeed it was this judgemental characteristic of Macaulay's work which engendered his criticism of it. Kenrick wrote that 'His [Macaulay's] censures are expressed in more impassioned language than ... is consistent with the tone of history'.<sup>230</sup> Kenrick felt that when Macaulay became more familiar with the role of historian and was less under the influence of parliamentary habits, he would learn to control his temperament and 'acquire the calmness of an historical critic'.<sup>231</sup> He added that Macaulay's lack of impartiality lay largely in the 'unsparing censure with which he loads that to which he is opposed'.<sup>232</sup> Kenrick's historical consciousness was much more sophisticated than that of Macaulay and indeed his historical thought represented a very different form of treatment of the values of the past in isolating them completely from those of the present.

Considered as complete works, the method and structure employed in the compilation of *Ancient Egypt Under the Pharaohs* (1850) and *Phœnicia* (1855),

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<sup>228</sup> Roy Porter, *Edward Gibbon: Making History* (London, 1988), pp. 4-5.

<sup>229</sup> Joseph Hamburger, *Macaulay and the Whig Tradition* (Chicago, 1976).

<sup>230</sup> John Kenrick, 'Macaulay's History of England', Review Article of *The History of England from the Accession of James 2*. By Thomas Babington Macaulay, 2 vols, London, 1849, CR, New Series, vol 5, March, 1849, p. 208. This review article was in two parts, and this quotation is from the second. The first part of the review appeared in the same volume of the *Christian Reformer*, pp.129-139.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

both of which were published after Kenrick's retirement from his professorship at Manchester College in 1850, were examples of a new kind of history. Instead of a one - dimensional narrative which included within it occasional commentaries on themes of ancient life, these two works were divided into separate sections devoted entirely to different aspects of the two nations. In *Ancient Egypt* there are separate chapters on climate, geography, population, language, agriculture, commerce, industrial arts, the military, domestic life, dress, architecture, sculpture, painting, writing, music and science. In the case of *Phœnicia* we may add colonies, navigation, mining and metallurgy and government. The final sections of each work are devoted to the general fortunes of each nation in political and military history.

These works were a fuller extension of the idea of national development, for they revealed a much clearer picture, from many different angles, of the lives and culture of ancient peoples. In structure and composition the two works were very sophisticated, for they chose to account for the origins and development of many cultural and social aspects of peoples rather than simply their wars and political histories. They were designed in this way largely due to the influence of Boeckh and also of A.H.L. Heeren, on whose lectures Kenrick based his own courses in history at York after 1820. Kenrick wrote that 'The work of my honoured teacher, Heeren, first assigned to commerce its due place in the history of ancient nations'.<sup>233</sup> In his own *History of Ancient Greece*, Heeren wrote separate chapters on the Greek constitution, political economy, judicial system, the military and the influences of poetry and philosophy on the government.

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<sup>233</sup> Kenrick, *Phœnicia*, pp. vii-viii.

Thus, from that turning point at which there came about an intersection of ideas between John Kenrick's Unitarian theology and historical biblical criticism and Heyne's perspectives on the interpretation of ancient myth several important themes were revealed in Kenrick's intellectual development. History, which was founded upon empirical fact, could interact with imagination. The philosophical basis for this was that form of British Romanticism which modified and coalesced the sense perceptions of empiricism to produce the creations of human imagination. It was this idea which laid the philosophical foundation for the integration of myth as part of the historical process of development. The importance of Unitarian biblical criticism and its search for the 'springhead', the nucleus of truth drew him naturally to Heyne's ideas about the origins of myth. The implications of this was an appreciation of the diversity of peoples in their cultural development and an understanding of cultural relativism, the core idea of the historians of the Romantic Age. Crucial to this way of thinking had been that emphasis on the separate, localised origins of a people, for without this there could be no sense of uniqueness.

Acutely aware of the importance of historical inquiry and the value of the primary origins of things, he historicised the myth rather than the minds which created it. This, together with Kenrick's belief in the organic nature of the nation, which is the essence of the idea of relativism in a cultural sense, meant that he understood the outlines of a new consciousness founded upon the internal growth of unique and diverse historical forms. These changes in John Kenrick's thought were of some significance. The 'seeds' of a varied collection of new

perspectives on the understanding of the mythic past had fallen on the fertile soil of the Unitarian interpretation of the Bible.



**CHAPTER SIX**  
**ROADS TO HISTORY 2 : LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND**  
**HISTORY**

One form of assessment of the depth of historicist understanding in a writer's work in the middle years of the nineteenth century is the way in which he dealt with language and literature. The ideas of changes in language over time, its interaction with human thought, its cohesive power over societies and nations, its organic nature and correlation with historical development all represented a departure from English Enlightenment themes. These new thoughts about language were consistent with a perception that it was something unique to a people and of the mode of speech being a strong influence on a society's cultural development. The Romantic Age witnessed the multiple source theories of the origin of languages as opposed to the single origin concepts characteristic of Enlightenment thought. Finally, the understanding of linguistic change was a tool for the historian of ancient nations, for alterations in elements of language could help to plot the movements and connections of peoples in the distant past.

A critic's approach to literature also serves as an indicator of his frame of mind at this period. The rejection of eighteenth century neo-classical standards of aesthetics and taste in favour of a form of criticism which considered literary and artistic works in terms of their own context also followed a route towards Romanticism. John Kenrick's ideas about both language and literature clearly

encompassed elements of the historicist frame of mind with which he perceived historical development and a new approach to literary taste, and together they defined a new philosophical approach very different from that of the English Enlightenment.

The radical Enlightenment view on language had been typified by Joseph Priestley, for whom language was a science. Priestley's thought was in tune with the Enlightenment tendency to believe in a single source of human speech, a primitive language 'spoken by the first family of the human race'.<sup>1</sup> He thought that diversity in human tongues was caused by the absence of the practice of writing, by the frequent admission of inflections into what was a simple and primitive form of speech, and also by differences in climate and ways of living.<sup>2</sup> Typically, Priestley's own preference would have been a '*philosophical and universal language*, which shall be the most natural and perfect expression of human ideas and sentiments'.<sup>3</sup> At the time, however, he contented himself with his main objective, of showing the variety of ways in which different languages expressed 'the same mental conceptions'.<sup>4</sup> The tendency in Priestley's thought on language was how to find a way towards uniformity rather than to consider any appreciation of diversity.

Half a century after Priestley however, the approach to language amongst leading philologists, particularly in Germany, had revealed important

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* [1762], Reprint (Menston, 1970), p. 288. Priestley's lectures on the theory of language were given at Warrington Academy where he was tutor in languages and *belles lettres*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289-290.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

characteristics of a historical consciousness related to the Romantic thought of the nineteenth century. Language was an integral factor in the development of a culture or a nation. It was the expression of a people at a particular period in their history and it developed organically along with mental, cultural and historical changes. Language was a cohesive force in society and with this and all other factors in play it was typical of 'every other form of the historical development of humanity'.<sup>5</sup> Language was a tool in the identification of the cultural and historical movements in the life of a people and therefore historians could use language and the changes over time of patterns of speech as clues towards the interpretation of the history of ancient worlds.

Considered as a general frame of mind, the manner in which German philologists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries approached their studies of languages was historical. The scholar Jacob Grimm (1785-1863), following the ideas of the Danish philologist R.C. Rask (1787-1832), transformed the recognition of consonant shifts between several Indo-European languages into a law of linguistic development.<sup>6</sup> What became known as Grimm's Law traced sound shifts between Greek, Gothic and Old High German. It recognised patterns which were systematic and coherent and which established connections

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<sup>5</sup> Wilhelm Windelband, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (London, 1921), pp. 284, 285.

<sup>6</sup> R.C. Rask wrote that 'If there is found between two languages agreement in the forms of indispensable words to such an extent that rules of letter changes can be discovered for passing from one to the other, then there is a basic relationship between these two languages'. Rask is quoted from *Undersøgelse om det gamle nordiske eller islandske sprogs oprindelse* (Copenhagen, 1818), English translation of parts, Lehmann, 1967, pp. 29-37, no exact page given, in R.H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (London, 1990), p. 198. This statement of Rask's formed the basis of Grimm's Law, which was first formulated in the second edition of his *Deutsche Grammatik*, published in 1822.

between the Indo European family of languages.<sup>7</sup> Grimm saw in the sound shifts which he had identified what he believed to be evidence of an assertion of identity in the early German speaking peoples.<sup>8</sup> His linguistic work and his writing of German folk tales along with his brother Wilhelm, were all part of the German Romantic movement which was in harmony with a strong consciousness of national pride, identity and community. This group of Indo-European languages was the central focus of the new linguistic sciences and eminent in this particular field was Franz Bopp (1791-1867).<sup>9</sup> Bopp went further than Grimm and tried to trace the original grammatical structures of these various languages in order to discover the positions they occupied relative to one another. He became convinced that Sanskrit was not the mother language, but just one of many related tongues.<sup>10</sup>

Language had not been given to man directly from God. The German poet, critic and thinker J.G. Herder had concluded that in order to understand language man required reason and therefore already possessed language.<sup>11</sup> This was because language and thought were inseparable, for 'language becomes a *natural organ of the understanding, a sense of the human soul*'.<sup>12</sup>

The German philologist and educationalist Karl Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-

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<sup>7</sup> See Frans van Coetsem, 'Grimm's Law : A Reappraisal of Grimm's Formulation from a Present Day Perspective', in Elmer H. Antonsen (ed.) with James W. Marchand and Ladislav Zgusta, *The Grimm Brothers and the Germanic Past : Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science* (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 43-59. For a short analysis of the reaction to Grimm's work in England see Raymond A. Wiley, 'Grimm's Grammar Gains Ground in England, 1832-1852', *ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>8</sup> Anna Morpurgo Davies, *Nineteenth Century Linguistics* (London, 1998), p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Bopp's major work was entitled *A Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Old Slavonic, Gothic and German* (Berlin, 1833-1852).

<sup>10</sup> Davies, *Nineteenth Century Linguistics*, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup> Michael N. Forster, *Herder: Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 96.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

1835), who was instrumental in founding the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, where Kenrick was to study in 1819-1820, wrote that language was 'the formative organ of thought'<sup>13</sup> because it allowed for the objectification of mental processes.<sup>14</sup>

Herder believed that the affinity between language, thought and development accounted for cultural diversity for 'this *difference* [between people] *right next to each other* can be explained just as naturally as the *unity* of the *familial language* in one nation'.<sup>15</sup> The concept of language as a cohesive agent on a people or a nation was complemented by Humboldt's theory that the inner structure, or *innere Sprachform*, of each language made it unique. It contributed to national character, for language and thought exercised a two – way influence on one another and consequently, wrote Humboldt, 'the mere peculiarity of language exercises influence on the nature of nations',<sup>16</sup> and it is certain that 'the *development of language* first conveys *national differences* into the brighter region of the mind'.<sup>17</sup>

Humboldt argued also that since language was the product of an organic being it shared in the nature of all that was organic, meaning that every part of it

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<sup>13</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, 'Nature and Constitution of Language' in *On Language : On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on Mental Development of the Human Species*, § 9, quoted by Michael Losonsky (ed.), *Wilhelm von Humboldt : On Language* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 54. Although von Humboldt turned to the study of languages in 1799, this work was not published until after his death in 1836.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Langham Brown, *Wilhelm von Humboldt's Conception of Linguistic Relativity* (The Hague, 1967), p. 68. See also Davies, *Nineteenth Century Linguistic*, p. 116.

<sup>15</sup> Forster (ed.), *Herder*, p. 151.

<sup>16</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, quoted from 'Ueber den Nationalcharakter der Sprachen', *Zeitschrift für Völkpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, xiii, 1882, pp. 211-232, in Langham Brown, *Humboldt's Linguistic Relativity*, p. 80.

<sup>17</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, 'Character of Languages', in *On Language*, § 20, quoted by Losonsky (ed.), *Humboldt : On Language*, p. 153.

had life only because of the existence of all the other parts.<sup>18</sup> Languages, like peoples, were diverse cultural ‘growths’, each forming its own holistic unity, the parts of which were interdependent. This conceptual framework was complementary to cyclical ideas of birth, development, decay, death and rebirth in relation both to the language and the culture which spoke it. This relativistic approach was antithetical to Enlightenment ideas about the uniformity of progress for all mankind. It is in fact the German poet and critic August Wilhelm von Schlegel who is most often credited with the incorporation of organic forms into the discussions about language, although it is also recognised that Herder’s work had already provided the impetus for the use of organic metaphors.<sup>19</sup>

Humboldt became most famous for his classification of languages into three separate groups. Firstly, there was the isolating type, such as Chinese, then the agglutinative, like Turkish, and finally the inflectional, with Sanskrit as the prime example. At one end of the spectrum was Chinese, which was the purest isolating language and at the other was Sanskrit, the purest flexional tongue. All the others, including the agglutinative languages, or hybrids, were ranged between these two.<sup>20</sup> Bopp too, and the Schlegel brothers<sup>21</sup> also found methods of emphasising the differences between language types.

In stark contrast to this method was the tendency to highlight the *similarities* between human tongues. This was the Christian and Enlightenment

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<sup>18</sup> Davies, *Nineteenth Century Linguistics*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>20</sup> R.H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (London, 1997), pp. 166-168. For Humboldt’s thoughts on the Chinese language, see his essay ‘On the Grammatical Structure of the Chinese Language’, in T. Harden and D. Farrelly (eds.) *Wilhelm von Humboldt : Essays on Language* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), pp. 95-110.

<sup>21</sup> August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845), the poet and critic, and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), who was one of the most famous critics of German Romanticism.

approach which was characteristic of the scholarship of the orientalist and philologist Sir William Jones (1746-1794). It was Jones' intention to show man's unity and common ancestry and to prove the theory that all mankind had been descended from a single pair, an idea that bestowed upon the human race a unity of kind and purpose. As a result, his method was to emphasise the common elements in humanity, rather than to point out the differences.<sup>22</sup> This applied to languages, of course, and Jones worked hard to establish the common linguistic origins of post-diluvian humanity which had established itself in Mesopotamia after the flood. This remnant of humanity, Jones believed, subsequently divided into three distinct branches and lost what he was convinced had been a shared primary language. Contrastingly, however, philologists could ignore this kind of analysis and choose instead to emphasise the differences between languages in order to prove their uniqueness. It appears that many of the German philologists of this early nineteenth century period tended towards this latter approach.

There are indications of some very early influences on John Kenrick's ideas on language, in particular that of Professor John Young, his Greek tutor at Glasgow College and the teacher who most probably was responsible for Kenrick's early encounter with Heyne.<sup>23</sup> Kenrick wrote to his great-uncle, Samuel Kenrick, that not only was Young a very interesting lecturer in his

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<sup>22</sup> William Jones, *Discourses Delivered at the Asiatick Society, 1785-1792* [1807], Reprint (London, 1993), p. 188. This reprint from volume three of *The Works of William Jones* (1807) contains an introduction by Roy Harris and a bibliography of eighteenth - century linguistics by Karen Thomson.

<sup>23</sup> See chapter five, above.

manner, but that his matter was very original.<sup>24</sup> He treated the Greek language in a very different way from that method which was fashionable in England by

‘investigating its changes in successive eras and elucidating its structures by a reference to the principles of Philosophic grammar. I find it a very interesting employment to follow his track<sup>25</sup>

Forty seven years later, in a review article on a work of C.C.J. Bunsen (1791-1860), the Prussian diplomat and scholar, Kenrick wrote once again of Young that he was one of these who had seen that there were important patterns in language changes and had extended this principle of grammatical inflection, the result being that ‘a light was thrown on the formation of language which has since spread itself on all sides’.<sup>26</sup>

Young’s method must have suggested to him a perspective on language which involved the idea of change over time, and his ideas may have prepared Kenrick for understanding the Romantic treatment of linguistic topics which he encountered during his study year in 1819-1820 in Göttingen and Berlin. The primary objective of Kenrick’s stay in Göttingen had been to attend the lectures of Heeren and write his own new modern history course for his students at York.<sup>27</sup> At Berlin, however, he devoted his time ‘almost entirely to Philology’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The emphasis here was Kenrick’s.

<sup>25</sup> John Kenrick to Samuel Kenrick of Bewdley, 9 January, 1808, HMCL, MS. Misc. 7, fols. 289-290.

<sup>26</sup> John Kenrick, ‘Bunsen’s Philosophy of History’, Review Article of *Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History, Applied to Language and Religion*, by Christian Charles Josias Bunsen, 2 vols. (London, 1854), *CR*, vol. 11, pp. 525-538, quoted on p. 526.

<sup>27</sup> See also John Kenrick, ‘Notes of the Early Part of the Life of the Rev. John Kenrick written by him for his Wife in 1870-1872’. Copied by Elizabeth Reid in 1878. (Hereafter, ‘Notes’), UCL, Sharpe Papers 191, p. 54.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.



His decision to take a year's study leave had been partly the result of a desire to resign his post as tutor at Manchester College, York. Kenrick suffered from a lack of confidence in his own teaching abilities and a sense of being 'deficient in some qualities essentially requisite for such a station'.<sup>29</sup> A trip to the German speaking area of Europe was a natural choice for him. He been schooled in the German language and in the ideas of their scholars from an early age and therefore it was not surprising that there was also a great enthusiasm on the part of the young Kenrick for the trip.<sup>30</sup>

There are several unpublished sources from which we may learn something of Kenrick's direct experience of the ideas of the German intellectual elite in the year 1820 and a little about the nature of the impact upon him. The first is a letter to his friend, the college trustee G.W. Wood. The second is a memoir of his early life which was written much later during the years 1870-1872 and the third is the bundle of lecture notes Kenrick brought back from his studies at the German universities. Together they give some insight into the general intellectual background in which he studied and indicate some of the influences he encountered.

A letter from Göttingen to G.W. Wood, the college treasurer, in the winter of 1819<sup>31</sup> contained some news to Wood about German politics and the content of

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<sup>29</sup> John Kenrick to George William Wood, York, 18 January, 1817, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol 45. See also letters from Kenrick to Wood written on 29 January, 1817 and 2 March, 1817, *ibid.*, fols. 46-50, in which Kenrick expresses similar sentiments.

<sup>30</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, 11 June, 1819, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 72. The first part of the journey, which had been intended to provide an opportunity for Kenrick and his companion John Wellbeloved to absorb some of the culture of the German speaking world and to perfect the language, was marred by tragedy. The young Wellbeloved, son of Charles Wellbeloved (1769-1858), died of a fever during the first few weeks of the German trip.

<sup>31</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, Göttingen, 5 December, 1819, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fols. 73-74.

the German newspapers but nothing about his study experiences. However, Kenrick indicated his enthusiasm for his work by his stated desire to bring back with him to England a selection of books. With customary financial prudence he suggested it would be better to do this than to wait to order them once he was back in England, for that would prove to be a much more expensive exercise. However well intentioned he was in this respect, however, it became clear that his thirst for knowledge from Germany was never to be quenched by the volumes which he finally brought home.

Almost immediately on his return to York he reported to G.W. Wood that he had set up a German language class at Manchester College in which one of his pupils was John Rely Beard (1800-1876),<sup>32</sup> who in 1854 was to form Unitarian Home Mission Board and who retained an interest in German studies all his life.<sup>33</sup> From then, for the next fifteen years at least, Kenrick continued a regular importation of books from Germany.<sup>34</sup>

In 1823, for example, he asked Wood to send £25 and a few pence to the credit of a company in Hamburg for his purchase of books.<sup>35</sup> Two years later he wrote to Wood that he had 'an account...of £24.6s.8d...for a parcel of books from

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<sup>32</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, December 1820, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 78.

<sup>33</sup> Kenrick and Beard shared their common interest in German scholarship for many years. In 1850 Kenrick wrote to Beard, 'I see [from] the work of Schumann, which you have translated, that the question of the priority of Mark's gospel has been agitated in Germany. I was not aware of any thing having been recently written on this subject, my own conclusions having been arrived at entirely by my own inquiries'. John Kenrick to John Rely Beard, 6 March, 1850, JRL, Unitarian College Collection, Woodhouse Collection, Cupboard A/A2, pp. 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> See chapter eight below for an assessment of the German content of Kenrick's library, sold after his death in 1877 by the auctioneers Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge. A copy of the catalogue may be found at UCL, Sharpe Papers, 195.

<sup>35</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, 4 October 1823, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 94.

Germany for me'.<sup>36</sup> In 1832, having sent an order to Leipzig, he asked Wood to procure the 'usual credit' of £50.<sup>37</sup> By the following year, 1833, it is clear that there had been for some time a regular flow of literature from Germany to York. In a letter to William Rayner Wood Kenrick wrote that he would like to obtain through the 'usual channels' of Messrs. Schuster and Co. of Manchester a credit of £30 with Gruner and Co. of Leipzig, for the purpose of making 'my annual importation of German books. They will know in the counting house exactly how the thing is to be done'.<sup>38</sup>

Three months later a letter from Kenrick to William Rayner Wood was concerned with an edition of the works of Schiller. Kenrick noted that he had a pirated edition of the German poet's works, which could not be obtained in the regular way, but wrote that 'if you can fix on any other I shall be happy to include it in my next order'.<sup>39</sup> Kenrick's regular requests to Germany were both for his own scholarship and also for students such as Beard, who often requested German books as class prizes. Thus the trip to Germany only intensified Kenrick's interest in German literature, for in the subsequent years his enthusiasm never waned.<sup>40</sup> It was also during those years which followed

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<sup>36</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, York, 15 September 1825, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 118.

<sup>37</sup> John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, York, 18 April 1832, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 166.

<sup>38</sup> John Kenrick to William Rayner Wood, York, 26 February 1833, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 175. The head of the firm was probably Leo Schuster, the German merchant mentioned in Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875* (Manchester, 1976), see pp. 43 & 83, and also p. 380, note 62 and p. 385, note 28. Williams writes that Schuster was one of a group of German-born merchants in Manchester, of whom there were at least forty six by 1825, who were all prominent in their support of worthy causes in the city. Schuster he mentions as having become an annual subscriber to the Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews.

<sup>39</sup> John Kenrick to William Rayner Wood, York 25 May 1833, HMCL, MS Wood 3, fol. 182.

<sup>40</sup> See also: John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, York, 24 November 1823, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 97, John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, York, 4 June 1834, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 104, John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, 8 June 1824, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 105, John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, York, April 11 1828, HMCL, MS. Wood 21, fol. 54, John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, 10 June 1828, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 179, Leo Schuster

immediately upon his studies in Germany that Kenrick wrote his philological works on Latin and Greek grammar and prose composition, leaving the completion of his historical books until after his retirement in 1850. The speed with which he tackled his philological labours on his return to England was clearly an indication of his enthusiasm for the task.

During the summer in Berlin Kenrick studied Tacitus with the famed Homeric scholar F.A. Wolf (1759-1824). With Carl Gottlob Zumpt (1792-1849) he practised Latin composition and conversation, while with August Boeckh (1785-1867) his subject was Demosthenes. Many years later, as an elderly man in his eighties writing an account of his early life for his wife, Kenrick's memories of that period in his life were still clear and surprisingly vivid.<sup>41</sup> He recalled that of all the classicists at Berlin at the time, it was F.A. Wolf who had the highest reputation due to his Homeric studies which, like many others, Kenrick believed had given a real impetus to classical scholarship and the study of ancient nations.

According to Kenrick, however, Wolf had been content to 'repose upon his laurels, and did little in university teaching'.<sup>42</sup> Wolf's lectures on Tacitus were short-lived, for ill-health forced him to suspend the course not long after it had started. According to Kenrick, at about this time Wolf was involved in a dispute with the theologian Schleiermacher and also August Boeckh. The row concerned

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to G.W. Wood, Mosley Street, 19 October 1828, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 126, John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, York, 9 January 1829, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fols. 143-144, John Kenrick to G.W. Wood, Scarborough, 8 September 1829, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 132, John Kenrick to William Rayner Wood, York, 28 February 1834, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 196, John Kenrick to William Rayner Wood, York, 21 October 1834, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 218 and John Kenrick to William Rayner Wood, York, 10 May 1835, HMCL, MS. Wood 3, fol. 229.

<sup>41</sup> John Kenrick, 'Notes'.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

an unfavourable criticism Wolf had made of a colleague's edition of Plato.<sup>43</sup> Wolf, Kenrick wrote, was 'of a jealous and imperious temper'. He considered himself the Richard Bentley of German scholarship and indeed resembled the arrogant Bentley 'at all events in that respect'.<sup>44</sup> Kenrick noted that despite Wolf's high reputation in scholarship, the general opinion of the classical scholars of Berlin of his personality 'was unfavourable'.<sup>45</sup>

Kenrick, wishing to undertake a more thorough training in Latin composition in order to improve his teaching at York, had procured a letter of introduction from the biblical critic Eichhorn to F.A. Wolf, who was reputed to be 'the most critical Latinist'.<sup>46</sup> Wolf, in turn, recommended Kenrick to study under Zumpt, who was then Rector of a Gymnasium in Berlin. Zumpt, from whom Kenrick received private lessons in Latin, was, according to his young English pupil 'not only an excellent teacher but a very intelligent man'.<sup>47</sup> The German had produced a Latin grammar which appeared to Kenrick to be far superior to anything in England and in 1823, Kenrick published a highly – acclaimed translation of the work which ran, with enlargements and additions, to several more editions.<sup>48</sup> James Martineau remembered a remark made by Zumpt on John Kenrick's German, that it differed from a native speaker's in one respect

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68. Richard Bentley (1662-1742) was the classical scholar appointed in 1700 as Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. During his tenure his scholarship was matched by his arrogance and his temper.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. See John Kenrick, *A Grammar of the Latin Language, By C.G. Zumpt, Professor in the Frederick's Gymnasium, Berlin*, Translated, with Additions, by the Rev. John Kenrick (London, 1823).

only, that it was 'too pure'. It was correct literary speech without a trace of local colouring.<sup>49</sup>

Philology apart, the young Kenrick also heard lectures by the anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840),<sup>50</sup> Eichhorn, and the theologian Schleiermacher whose great wisdom on the subject of metaphysics was imparted to students each morning at six. Kenrick admitted to having been attracted to Schleiermacher's dawn philosophy lectures more by his celebrity rather by his subject. He recalled how strange was the terminology of German philosophy and how unintelligible it was, particularly to one who was not an enthusiastic early riser. Schleiermacher lectured from seven till eight on 'some subject which I forgot',<sup>51</sup> then went home with a day of study and clerical duties before him. The great theologian's lectures were delivered from brief notes and he 'never seemed at a loss for words, however abstruse the subject on which he spoke'.<sup>52</sup>

While his philosophy was perhaps daunting for students, whenever it was known that Schleiermacher was to preach the church was crowded. The German's figure was not imposing. Although his face was refined and showed great intellectual power, in physical terms 'He was below middle size and hump-backed'. In the pulpit he spoke entirely without notes, in clear tones and simple language, but beyond this and the 'liberality of his theological opinion, his

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<sup>49</sup> James Martineau, 'In Memoriam: John Kenrick', in *Essays, Reviews and Addresses: Personal and Political* (London, 1890), p. 404.

<sup>50</sup> See chapter seven, below.

<sup>51</sup> Kenrick, 'Notes', p. 62.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

preaching was not remarkable'.<sup>53</sup> Kenrick wrote that except when it was his own turn to preach, he did not think Schleiermacher was often seen in church. He recalls calling on the German theologian after the hour of morning service, which was regarded there as a perfectly appropriate time to visit, and finding him 'in a costume which showed that he had spent his morning at home'.<sup>54</sup>

The scholar who made the greatest impression on the young Kenrick was August Boeckh, whose insight into the public and private life of ancient Athens filled Kenrick with admiration.<sup>55</sup> Kenrick recalled that with regard to his status as a philologist Boeckh was 'the great ornament of the University', but unlike most scholars concerned with the study of language had also a great talent for calculation and 'delighted in statistics' which gave him a deep understanding of the revenues of the ancient Greek state.<sup>56</sup> Like all German professors, Boeckh never wore full academic dress, but instead, when summer came around appeared in a 'green stuff gown fastened by a band and tassels around the waist'.<sup>57</sup> It was harmless anecdotes such as these, written by Kenrick some fifty years after his visit to Germany, which give some fascinating insights into the behaviour and demeanour of some of the great intellects of early-nineteenth-century Germany. Kenrick's memories of his early life also reveal, however, how close he had been for a period to their innovative ideas in the fields of philology, ancient history and theology.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Martineau, 'In Memoriam : John Kenrick, p. 404.

<sup>56</sup> Kenrick, 'Notes', p. 65.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

August Boeckh gave a weekly lecture on the method of philological study, and chaired the weekly meeting of a Philological Seminarium at which there were readings from a Latin author followed by a discussion on him in Latin.<sup>58</sup> These weekly lectures and others, including Wolf's ill – fated course on Tacitus, were recorded in the notes which Kenrick wrote during his months in Berlin.<sup>59</sup> This is the third source of information available on his year in Germany. Sadly, however, except perhaps to a modern-day polymath, the contents of this rather chaotic bundle of notes are virtually unintelligible. Granted, they were written in Kenrick's clear and precise hand, but the notes were taken down in a scholarly mixture of Greek, Latin, German, a little English and Rich's shorthand,<sup>60</sup> and consequently remain largely beyond the grasp of the modern scholar. Even if one happened to be well versed in the classics and in nineteenth century German, one would still have to master the intricacies of the outlines of Rich's shorthand.

However, one basic rule of Rich's shorthand was always to write out proper names in full to avoid confusion and consequently from this the modern reader is at least able to glean something of the content of the lectures at which were written these notes. From the bundle of loose folios which survive it is impossible to gain any accurate knowledge of how the ideas of the great philologists were presented at this time or indeed how they were received by Kenrick himself. The

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>59</sup> John Kenrick, German Notes, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.41.

<sup>60</sup> This was a form of shorthand originally devised in the seventeenth century by one Jeremiah Rich. A fourth edition of *The Pens Dexterity Completed, or, Mr. Riches Short-hand now perfectly Taught, Which in his life-time by his Table was never done*, was published in London in 1676. The shorthand was updated in the early eighteenth century by Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) and later by the Unitarian divine Lant Carpenter (1780-1840). It was used extensively in Dissenting Academies by many scholars, including Richard Price, Thomas Belsham and John Kenrick himself. See Appendix.



notes do, however, give at least some indications of *whose* work was mentioned at the lectures. The first name which is noticeable is that of Grimm and the following pages appear to indicate that there had been some notes taken on Grimm's theory. This may well be the case, for only a few months before Kenrick arrived in Berlin, Jacob Grimm had published the first volume and edition of his *Deutsche Grammatik*, which traced the historical development of the Germanic languages.<sup>61</sup>

Nearby in the notes was recorded the name of the poet F.G. Klopstock (1724-1803), who anticipated the Romantics in his free and expressive use of language and chose patriotic themes from ancient German mythology for many of his poems. Also making an appearance in the random pages was another forerunner of the German Romantic movement, the poet Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813). Wieland, whose allegorical poem *Oberon* anticipated many Romantic themes, also spent much of his time translating Greek and Roman texts. The Schlegel brothers, August Wilhelm and Friedrich, also appear in the text of the notes. They were, of course, both Sanskrit scholars,<sup>62</sup> but their work was also regarded as an inspiration to the new Romantic movement. August Wilhelm Schlegel's lectures on criticism, for example, illustrate clearly his Romantically - inspired aversion to any neo-classical 'despotism of taste' and instead a wish to appreciate poetry as a 'universal gift of heaven' in which even

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<sup>61</sup> Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik*, first published in 1819. The second edition was almost entirely rewritten between 1822 and 1840.

<sup>62</sup> See above.

'so-called barbarians and savages have their proportional share'.<sup>63</sup> Neither, he wrote, is it possible to be a 'genuine connoisseur' without being capable of imagining ourselves placed 'in the peculiar situation of other people and other times', and 'to be aware of them at their very core'.<sup>64</sup>

Kenrick's notes also contain information on the analysis of Greek texts, for there was mention of David Ruhnken (1723-1798), a German-born follower of the English classicist Richard Bentley. Also appearing is the name of August Immanuel Bekker (1785-1871), who had studied at Halle and who had been appointed professor of philosophy at Berlin in 1810. As a classical philologist, however, the main focus of his work was on Greek prose texts, and he produced several highly acclaimed editions of classical Greek writers. In one of the folios at the bottom of the bundle one can just distinguish the name of Humboldt and a little further on Schelling. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), was a towering figure in German idealist philosophy who took his inspiration from Kant and Fichte. His conviction was that man was driven not only by reason but also by natural impulses and the essence of his contribution to the Romantic movement was the unification of the natural and spiritual in man in terms of art.

Consequently, although Kenrick's 'German Notes' remain in great part virtually unintelligible to the modern scholar, it is nevertheless possible to gain, from the notation of names of writers and thinkers who were under discussion at these lectures, some idea of the influences under which he studied at this time.

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<sup>63</sup> August Wilhelm Schlegel, quoted from *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, First Part, First Lecture (no page given), in A. Leslie Willson (ed.) *German Romantic Criticism* (New York, 1982), p. 176. Originally given in German in 1808 at Vienna, the first English translation of these lectures appeared in 1815.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

He would have absorbed the hypotheses of some of the great names in German philology, who recognised the whole historical significance of language as a vehicle for uniqueness in cultural development and identity. Also, he would have become acquainted with some of the major themes of German Romanticism in terms not only of language but also the appreciation of literature in historical context rather than by means of universal standards. The impenetrability of the 'German Notes' makes it impossible to relate aspects of Kenrick's thought to the influence of specific thinkers. However, the modern scholar is able to gain at least some idea of the general themes which dominated the lectures at which the notes were taken. In Germany, Kenrick was influenced by ideas of a Romantic nature, themes concerning changes in language over time, its inseparability from human thought, its cohesive power, organic nature and multiple sources of origin. Language was a tool for history and a catalyst for the historical literary criticism which rejected abstract standards of judgement.

Because language developed historically, every tongue had a specific structure and vocabulary at any given period and it was with that in mind the etymologist should conduct his studies. In the preface to his translation of Zumpt's Latin Grammar, published in 1823,<sup>65</sup> Kenrick was very careful to point out that Zumpt's method was not to understand the whole history of the Latin language. His idea was to find a way to form a Latin prose style upon the model

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<sup>65</sup> John Kenrick, *Zumpt's Grammar of the Latin Language*. The other two philological works written in the aftermath of his trip to Germany were, John Kenrick, *An Introduction to Greek Prose Composition, from the German of V.C.F. Rost and E.F. Wustemann*, by the Rev. John Kenrick (London, 1828) and John Kenrick, *A Grammar of the Greek Language, by Augustus Mattiae*, Revised and Enlarged by John Kenrick (London, 1832).

of the 'purest writings of the golden age – the age of Cicero and Caesar'.<sup>66</sup> This was not to say, wrote Kenrick, that Zumpt confined his choice of words and phrases to one age, for such pedantry has 'long since been ridiculed and exploded'.<sup>67</sup> The reason Zumpt decided to concentrate on the grammar of the 'golden age' was because its rules of *construction* were well designed to assist in composing in an ancient language. There was no reason to use a variety of models from several eras, for 'the attempt to combine the practice of different ages would produce an incongruous mixture'.<sup>68</sup>

In other words, Zumpt was perfectly aware that language altered in different ages. His choice of the Latin of the 'golden age' of Cicero and Caesar was by no means pedantic. He chose this particular age of Latin for reasons which were primarily utilitarian, because it so happened that it provided the best structures for the teaching of grammar. First published in 1818, it was soon recognised, wrote Kenrick, that Zumpt's grammar had 'a vast superiority over all others'.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it had been largely Zumpt's very recognition of the philosophical principles of language development that had given his grammar precedence over previous works which had been *less* conscious of the different ages of the Latin language.

Years later Kenrick reflected on ideas on the development of languages, which by the mid-nineteenth century had disseminated into both German and

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<sup>66</sup> Kenrick, *Zumpt's Grammar of the Latin Language*, p. vi.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> John Kenrick 'Life and Writings of Zumpt', Review Article of *De Caroli Timothei Zumptii Vita et Studiis Narratio Aug. Wilh. Zumptii. Accedunt Caroli Timothei Orationes Latinae Sex*, pp. 197. Berolini, 1851, *PR*, vol. 7, 1851, pp. 308-312, quoted at pp. 310-311.

English intellectual circles. These ideas had been systematised by German philology in the work of Friedrich Schlegel, who saw such principles in relation to the origins of inflections, and by Jacob Grimm, who had determined the intermediate steps between the 'beginning and the end of a series of changes'.<sup>70</sup> Grimm's work had been crucial, wrote Kenrick, because the intermediate steps 'often afforded proof of an identity'.<sup>71</sup> Grimm, he added, had been enabled to classify the changes which language underwent and approximately to lay down their laws. This meant that etymology was no longer guesswork but science and took 'its place as an auxiliary and a supplement to history'.<sup>72</sup>

Language, which altered in its vocabulary and its grammatical structures over time, was the key to the mental development of the people who spoke it, for language and thought were interdependent. This, of course, had been a fundamental contention of both Herder and Humboldt, but it was Herder who first saw language as *the* formative factor in the uniqueness of cultural development. On the question of the interaction of language and thought, Kenrick agreed with both of them when he wrote that language was not an *invention* of mankind, by which we mean the result of the intellect acting upon 'the powers and properties of things extraneous to himself'. Rather, it was an 'instinctive *function* of the combined organs of thought and utterance'.<sup>73</sup>

The apparent absence of any desire to communicate in those who had been isolated from others did not detract from the idea that language was a

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<sup>70</sup> Kenrick 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', pp. 526, 527.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 527.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> John Kenrick, *An Essay on Primæval History* (London, 1846), p. 109.

natural function of man. This need to form language to communicate was a desire which comes from *within* rather than something which has been triggered by external factors. He wrote that 'It is as natural to the human being to speak articulately, as to the brutes to communicate by inarticulate sounds'.<sup>74</sup> He pointed out that the difficult question about the origin of language had stemmed from the fact that it was conceived as a 'conventional system'. As such, it could not have been established in the first place without the use of language itself, and consequently 'it seemed that the existence of the thing to be explained was involved in the explanation of its origin'.<sup>75</sup> That the origins and development of language did not constitute an arbitrary process but a natural one may be proved by the fact that the roots of any language, whether French, German, Greek or Chinese, were never found to be more than a few hundreds in number.<sup>76</sup> In stark contrast, the possible combinations of vocal sound amount to 'a number hardly to be expressed by figures'.<sup>77</sup> Clearly, it was the case that the growth and formation of language from these simple roots, relatively few in number, was not an arbitrary process, but one which had been

carried on with a purpose of making vocal sound  
a more exact representative of the operations and  
affections of the mind.<sup>78</sup>

As time went by the process became more sophisticated. Once a language had mastered the art of communication by the imitation of sounds of an

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 110-111.

external nature it began to make use of analogical meanings. This meant that sounds of a particular quality had an affinity with certain mental and emotional states.<sup>79</sup> Kenrick reasoned that gradually, as language developed further, we were distanced from audible resemblances between words and the things they signified. As this happened, we found it more difficult to sense the relationship between the word and the thought. Despite this, however, there nevertheless remained a natural connection between the two which helped the speaker select the word which he made the symbol of his thought and aided the listener to appreciate its significance. It was this symbiosis of language and thought which formed the basis for a mutual understanding between people. Furthermore, the development of a national language over time was concurrent with the development of the mental state of a nation.

Some of these ideas about the co-existence of language and thought and their relationship to the historical understanding of language Kenrick later projected back into his biblical interpretation. In his work, *The Value of the Holy Scriptures and the Right Mode of Using Them*, published in 1853, as a guide to scriptural interpretation, he wrote that the discourses of Jesus were the least obscure portions of the New Testament because 'their truths are drawn from a perpetual spring of feeling in the human heart'.<sup>80</sup> This emotion lay deep beneath the superficial changes in opinions, manners and modes of speech of the time. Contrastingly, the writings of Paul were the most difficult to interpret for, 'the mind and style of the writer had been thoroughly imbued with the peculiar ideas

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-112.

<sup>80</sup> John Kenrick, *The Value of the Holy Scriptures and the Right Mode of Using Them* (London, 1853), p. 45.

of his school and nation'.<sup>81</sup> This was characteristic, of course, of the traditional Unitarian method, which had been to interpret scripture historically, and according not only to the circumstances surrounding events but also those which influenced the author. In this case the linguistic element was cited by Kenrick as a factor in the study of scripture.

By now, Kenrick had the full force of German philological inquiry behind him to bring depth and a clearer understanding to his biblical scholarship. Because 'thought and language have a reciprocal action on one another',<sup>82</sup> the difficulty in the interpretation of Paul is not simply verbal. It extends to the 'very mode of the conception of truth.'<sup>83</sup> The modern reader should not, wrote Kenrick, take the sense of the scriptures by what comes naturally to him, which was generally that which accorded most with modern usage.<sup>84</sup> The sole objective ought to be to discover by the established rules of language 'and the special genius of the language which he is interpreting'<sup>85</sup> what the author meant to say. Thus, having absorbed over the years the linguistic ideas he gained largely from German philology, Kenrick re-defined to some degree his approach to the interpretation of the scriptures.

With regard to the interpretation of the Old Testament the critic had to take note of that 'special genius', or uniqueness, of the Hebrew tongue which had been intensified by the fact that the Jewish people had been long separated from the rest of the world. There had been little influence from other tongues to dilute

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 47.



its own singular characteristics which meant that the scholar had to appreciate the peculiarities, or uniqueness, of thought and expression which were so characteristic of this ancient nation. The symbiosis of language and thought in a situation where external influences and connections with other nations were few or non-existent resulted in the development of a people with very distinctive characteristics. Humboldt would have agreed, for in 1822 wrote that 'The characteristic qualities of nations and ages are ... intimately intertwined with those of the relevant languages'.<sup>86</sup> This interaction of language and thought, which in turn produced specific national characteristics, also supported the idea of cultural uniqueness.

The power of language as a cohesive, binding force on society functioned in two ways. Firstly, it fuelled a centripetal dynamic which energised and strengthened the inner cohesion of a society and its uniqueness. By accomplishing that, however, it defined more clearly how different that language and people were from those in other societies. It brought to light the notion of the variety of cultures and their differences relative to one another. Incorporating both these concepts, of inner cohesion and external alienation, Kenrick wrote in 1832 that there was no stronger tie of community than to speak the same language, no difference more readily remarked 'or one which more effectually keeps nations from mingling, than a diversity of speech'.<sup>87</sup> It was true also that a

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<sup>86</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, 'On the National Character of Languages', (no page given) in T. Harden and D. Farrelly (eds.), *Wilhelm von Humboldt: Essays on Language* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), p. 55. This was a fragment of a piece of work originally published in 1822.

<sup>87</sup> John Kenrick, 'On the Names of the Antehellenic Inhabitants of Greece', *PM*, vol. 1, 1832, p. 611.

common speech was ‘one of the closest bonds of the social union’,<sup>88</sup> for with a community of language, similarity of institutions and religion is naturally combined, and ‘the belief of a common origin binds all together, by a tie as strict and sacred as that of a family’.<sup>89</sup> Language was the key to understanding a people, for it reflected upon their character and traditions. It was natural to speculate that if language acted on the national mind and received an impression upon it in return then, as Vico has shown, wrote Kenrick, our first insight into the peculiarities of a people is to be gained from ‘a knowledge of their speech – the necessary condition of their social union’.<sup>90</sup>

Kenrick’s comments on Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) were well founded. In 1832 he had written a learned article on the Italian philosopher for Hare and Thirlwall’s *Philological Museum*,<sup>91</sup> concluding in his analysis that Vico was ‘one of the most original thinkers whom his country has produced’.<sup>92</sup> Kenrick was not impressed, however, by Vico’s idea of Providence working in the world and in history. The Unitarian defended, as always the integrity of historical inquiry by emphasising the need to ‘try everything by its own evidence, confident that ...truth can never be inconsistent with truth’.<sup>93</sup>

Language, he believed, provided the cohesive power to hold together societies and accentuate their own uniqueness because it interacted with thought

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<sup>88</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 112.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> John Kenrick, ‘Regal Rome’, Review Article on *Regal Rome, an Introduction to Roman History*, by Francis W. Newman, Professor of Latin in University College, London, 1852, *PR*, vol. 8, 1852, p. 294.

<sup>91</sup> John Kenrick, ‘Vico’, *PM*, vol. 2, 1833, pp. 626-644.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 644.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* This article by Kenrick on Vico has received praise in recent times as the best exposition on the Italian prior to the Robert Flint book on Vico (Edinburgh, 1884) See Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (trans.), *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico* (Cornell, Ithaca, 1944), p. 87.

and therefore helped to mould national character. Language was not the product of passive imitation. Rejecting the radical English Enlightenment empiricist argument that man was a passive receptor of external sense impressions, Kenrick revealed a contrasting view that

the child, following some internal impulse of his own  
is forever showing a disposition to go beyond the barriers  
which grammar and usage have set up, to coin new  
words, or follow out new analogies <sup>94</sup>

Here appeared the idea of the Romantic idealisation of childhood, of the appreciation of creativity in a state of innocence, but in the quotation there was also something else, a process within the development of language of which Humboldt wrote. This was the German's idea of *energeia*, which described the inner creativity of the speaker, which in turn gave the language its *innere Sprachform*, or internal structure. <sup>95</sup> The whole idea of innate linguistic creativity and by implication, of course, that of concurrent intellectual development, in turn gave strength not only to the concept of cultural uniqueness itself but also to the Romantic notion of society as an organism.

Speech, like other forms of development in Romantic thought, was organic. This idea, revealed as a theme in Kenrick's historical thought, <sup>96</sup> was a historicist concept which also formed an integral part of his perception of the nature of language. In the historicist mind, historical forms were social organisms held together by complex relationships between language, tradition,

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<sup>94</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 111.

<sup>95</sup> See above, notes 16 & 17.

<sup>96</sup> See chapter five, above.

mental development and all the social mores which blend together in a community or society. Isaiah Berlin wrote that these social organisms were 'quasi-biological entities which defied analysis by the exact quantitative methods of chemistry or physics'.<sup>97</sup> They were associations of people each of whom had 'its own individual laws of growth, its own unique 'organic' character', and they were 'social wholes which develop like plants'.<sup>98</sup>

Concepts such as these were easily integrated into the understanding of the development of language. Kenrick's view was that its study required more than simply an accumulation of vocabularies and it ought to be accompanied and guided by an 'insight into the laws of human thought and the organism of speech'.<sup>99</sup> To this he added that in both these respects 'the speculative German has been greatly in advance of the practical Englishman'.<sup>100</sup> Jacob Grimm, Kenrick wrote, was able to 'classify the changes which language necessarily undergoes', and to lay down their laws 'by careful study of the organic laws of speech'.<sup>101</sup> These organic ideas of philology were reflected in the imagery which Kenrick also used to describe historical development. He wrote that language, like history, exhibits *metamorphosis*, not creation. New kingdoms come into being from the fragments of empires and 'languages from the decay of other languages'.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Isaiah Berlin, quoted in foreword to Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London, 1972), p. ix.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>99</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', p. 526.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

<sup>102</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', p. 530.

In similar terms, in the literature of Greece the East had preserved a precious seed 'like the seed enclosed in the swathing of a mummy'. It had neither air, light, moisture or earth, but in the West a congenial soil was awaiting it and, transmitted to this soil it germinated and grew.<sup>103</sup> The organic concepts in Kenrick's thought related to language applied, as they did for the Germans, just as easily to the birth, death and decay of historical forms themselves.

His search for the origins of linguistic forms, however, could never be straightforward. As we have seen, Kenrick's thought was dominated by the desire to discover the 'primitive nucleus' of something pure before it was in any way altered by corruption, development or change. His own description of this, the 'springhead' of truth was very apt, for his driving need to discover the verifiable historical beginnings of religion, myth or language was the intellectual equivalent of the search for the source of the Nile. However, he pinpointed no single location in his theories about the origins of human speech. He wrote that modern inquirers surveying the endless variety of structures and roots in human language, from the monosyllabic Chinese to the polysynthetic Mexican, in which an oak is called *Amanganaschquiminsi*, knew that their derivation from a single stock was impossible. He did not believe there was one form of speech from which all human tongues had been disseminated. Rather, he was sure that there had been separate origins and different sources of human languages.<sup>104</sup>

His opinion about the multiple sources of language contrasted starkly with that of the Enlightenment thinker Sir William Jones who, in 1786, was the first to

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<sup>103</sup> John Kenrick, 'Causes of the Destruction of Classical Literature', in *A Selection of Papers on Subjects of Archaeology and History* (York, 1864), pp. 155-156.

<sup>104</sup> John Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 120.

argue that Greek, Latin and Sanskrit were related and had come from a common source. In his *Discourses* to the Asiatick Society, Jones' primary purpose was to establish the ethnic unity of Europeans, Indians and Chinese and the identification of Persia as the post-diluvian home of mankind. All this would, of course, be reconciled with orthodox Christian and biblical themes which held the belief in a single source theory in both ethnology and linguistics. Jones' discourse *On the Origin and Families of Nations*, as its title suggests, contains a definitive conclusion on the unity of humankind. Its ancestors may be traced to three 'families' descended from the sons of Noah, the Arabian, the Indian and the Tartar. He accepted, however, the regrettable fact that 'the language of Noah is lost irretrievably'.<sup>105</sup> Undeterred, however, by his own inability to establish any common linguistic features between these three branches of mankind, he nevertheless insisted that post-diluvian humanity had been one single community.

Kenrick's argument was the direct opposite of what Jones had tried to prove. Kenrick believed that different language forms had originated in different parts of the world. He wrote that the monosyllabic languages of Eastern Asia, those of the nomadic nations in Asia's Northern and Central regions, of the interior of Africa, the Indian Seas, the Pacific and the New World

are so manifold and various, that it is impossible to assign to them a common origin in a single locality, without ascending to an antiquity far exceeding all authentic

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<sup>105</sup> Jones, *Discourses*, p. 199.

chronology.<sup>106</sup>

Chronology was a crucial factor in the argument, for a period so limited as that which was usually supposed was quite inadequate to explain linguistic differences, say, between the Coptic and Syro-Arabian languages, or the Hebrew and the Syriac. Consequently, to the historian the ancient nations were *autochthones*,<sup>107</sup> peoples who were of their native soil and had been so from the earliest times.

The assumption, wrote Kenrick, that languages so different as to be virtually unintelligible to one another had developed within a few generations of the time when the first members of the human race were thought to have had one form of speech had impeded the advance of the new science of comparative philology. Despite this, he added, it was hoped that the recent researches would add much to the study of the 'affinities and filiations of mankind'.<sup>108</sup> The widespread family of languages, which has been called Indo – European, differed in most of its roots, still more in its etymological principles and grammatical forms, from the Semitic or Syro-Arabian family. Of the people supposed to be descended from Ham, only one, the Egyptian, has handed down to us any memorials of its ancient language 'but these are sufficient to know that it differed essentially from both the foregoing'.<sup>109</sup>

Kenrick argued his theory of separate linguistic origins around the circumstances of the development of writing in the ancient world. He pointed out

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<sup>106</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

that the Phœnician alphabet <sup>110</sup> was probably derived in some part from the phonetic alphabet of the Egyptians, and was in turn the 'parent of the Greek and Roman'. <sup>111</sup> This phonetic use of hieroglyphic characters 'would lead us to regard picture-writing as the remote source of the alphabet'. <sup>112</sup> However, he told his readers that in the cuneiform character of the Persepolitan inscriptions we had an example of an alphabet which had no connection with picture-writing, and had evidently 'been formed by combinations of a single character'. <sup>113</sup>

Although the antiquity of the inscriptions at Persepolis was not great, some were found on the very ancient ruins of Babylon which were similar but not identical. Thus, the Phœnician and Persepolitan alphabets were completely different in their form and structures. Furthermore, the Devanagari, the written Sanskrit, was different again, for it bore no resemblance to any of the alphabets of Western Asia. As for the Chinese form of writing, it could not even be called alphabetical because it denotes objects and ideas by immediate association with the visible sign appropriated to them, and 'not by analysis of the actual sounds of the language'. <sup>114</sup> Kenrick concluded therefore that we had here, in four great centres of ancient civilisation, four separate modes of denoting and communicating thought 'so dissimilar to each other, as to lead to the conclusion, that they are separate inventions'. <sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> John Kenrick devoted an entire chapter of his work *Phœnicia* (London, 1855) to a discussion of the Phœnician language and alphabet. See pp. 157-184. Also see below.

<sup>111</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 119.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*



This was a much more feasible explanation than that of those who make the coincidence of a few words in two different languages ‘a ground for maintaining the original identity or affinity of nations’.<sup>116</sup> Left to itself and without any historical factors in play, such as conquest by another nation, the language of a people will remain intact. Consequently, where some similarities do exist between it and another tongue, ‘migration and intermixture have been the cause’.<sup>117</sup> Kenrick’s view on the separate origins of languages concurred with his ideas on other cultural factors, such as myth and ancient religions. The implications of his ideas of linguistic relativism were even more significant. Languages, which Kenrick believed had separate origins and presented quite different structures and modes of communicating, were interdependent with thought. These two factors together implied that there was in Kenrick’s mind a deep consciousness of the differences in peoples and nations and a significant appreciation of their relativism in cultural terms. By implication this frame of mind would clearly extend through language and thought to values and ethical standards. Although Kenrick does not discuss this last point specifically in relation to language, it is clear that there was a tendency in his mind to appreciate the relationship between historical context and the formation of values.<sup>118</sup>

What factors had been responsible for this intellectual position which had developed in his mature thought on language by the mid-nineteenth century? How did these factors interact with one another, and which emerged as the most important of all? By the 1850’s there had accumulated several sources from

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> See chapter five, above, pp. 74 -77.

which this view of linguistic diversity may have been derived. Firstly, his support for uniqueness and diversity with regard to other cultural factors such as myth and pagan religions may have influenced his thought on linguistic sources. There were, in his view, different origins for the races of the world too, and this is discussed below.<sup>119</sup> Secondly, it was clear that the researches and conclusions of German philologists<sup>120</sup> such as Humboldt, whose classification of the world's languages into three groups was a compelling solution to the problems of philology, had lasting influence on him.

Most importantly, however, Kenrick, like all educated men, had become aware of the advances in the understanding of philology, ethnology, physiology and geology. The learned elite of these new, influential scientific disciplines did not, of course, entirely agree with the major points of religious orthodoxy. One compelling argument in favour of the truth of the scientific view was the fact that the Hebrew calculations that mankind had been on earth for a mere six thousand years was far too short a duration to have made possible the development of such diversity in tongues and in races. Orthodox theologians and scholars believed that mankind had descended from a single pair and that the Hebrew chronology which put man on earth for this relatively short period was true

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<sup>119</sup> See chapter seven, below.

<sup>120</sup> John Kenrick was not the only English scholar, of course, to have had experience of the German philological method. In 1838 the Rev. W.B. Winning, a clergyman from Bedford, published *A Manual of Comparative Philology* (London, 1838). The work recorded the affinity of the Indo-European languages and applied this conclusion to the primæval history of Europe, Italy and Rome. In a list of fourteen items cited in the compilation of the book, ten are German works. He lists volumes by Bopp, the two Schlegels, Carol Ritter and Karl Otfried Müller, and explains Grimm's Law to his readers (see pp. 36 ff). Unlike Kenrick, who rejects the traditional biblical-based view of both the languages of the world and the origins of mankind (see chapter seven, below) Winning's objective is to *reconcile* with the scriptures the science of comparative philology and its contentions about the diversity of linguistic sources.

because the scriptures were infallible. Science had shown that these two crucial elements of orthodox belief fundamentally contradicted one another.

Kenrick complained that despite the discoveries of science little was discussed openly or objectively about the question in England 'where a brand of heresy, if not of atheism, would be affixed to any one who doubted the literal truth of the Mosaic narrative'.<sup>121</sup> This, of course, spoke of the unity of mankind and in turn supported the notion that there had existed one God-given language, the Hebrew, from which all others had developed. Even supposing he had not been instinctively averse to the opinions of orthodoxy on this point, Kenrick would have opposed the idea that language had been given to man from God in any case. He had learned from German philology that language and thought were interdependent and developed concurrently, and so man's acceptance of the gift of language from God was a fallacy. As Herder had put it so succinctly, in order to understand language, man had reason, and therefore already possessed the gift of speech. In a lecture at Manchester College in 1830, Kenrick told students that the best argument for the human origins of language came from the form of the Chinese tongue.<sup>122</sup> In this language, which was probably the oldest in the world, complex ideas were still represented by the combinations of the simple ideas of which they consisted. If languages had been of divine communication, is it not likely that divine wisdom would have framed a shorter and simpler form of expression?<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', p. 530.

<sup>122</sup> Notes taken by William Raynor Wood, 'Is Divine Interposition Necessary to Account for the Origin of Language?', John Kenrick's Orations, 1830-1831, HMCL, MS. W.R. Wood 2, p. 30.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

The belief in the diversity and uniqueness of peoples and cultures which had pervaded his thought for many years slotted in neatly with the scientific discoveries which had come to light at this time. The expansion of empire had raised the consciousness of many to the many races of humanity on earth. In Britain in the 1850s the term 'ethnology' was the general framework for the study of the colourful and diverse cultural characteristics of non-European 'uncivilised' peoples.<sup>124</sup> One may suppose that Kenrick's study of diversity in myth, religion and language amongst ancient peoples had built a strong foundation for his reception of the conclusions of the new sciences about the different origins of language and also of mankind.<sup>125</sup>

These disciplines took a rational approach to the complex and contradictory problems of diversity and chronology and challenged some beliefs of Christian orthodoxy. As a Unitarian whose confidence in the power of reason and objective inquiry to solve each and every problem, however difficult, it was entirely predictable that Kenrick would take the side of science in opposition to the beliefs of orthodoxy which he had been fighting to disprove all of his adult life. Kenrick's time had come, for by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the conclusions of science had given this staunch Unitarian scholar an even stouter stick with which to beat his orthodox theological opponents.

Apart from his inbuilt antipathy to orthodox opinion, what annoyed Kenrick even more were those attempts by scholars of the Anglican clergy to justify their beliefs by any means possible – even if it meant that they carried their bias and

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<sup>124</sup> George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987), p. 47. See pp. 47 – 77 for an account of the ethnological studies of this period.

<sup>125</sup> See chapter seven, below.

prejudice into their scholarship, bending it to suit their own ends. His review of a work by the clergyman Charles Forster was scathing, to say the least.<sup>126</sup>

Forster was an orthodox writer and biblical critic whose views on the origin of language, which he argued had been one single source, concurred with his ideas on the infallibility of the Old Testament as an inspired text. Kenrick accused him of calling

theological prejudice to the aid of his argument...

and declares that to question on any ground whatever...

the infallible exactness even of the gospel genealogies

is to "strike at the root of Christianity and Revelation".

Kenrick struck out at the hapless Forster for taking no heed of all the advances in science and of all the new historical thinking in recent years, but of writing 'as he may have done three centuries ago'.<sup>127</sup> The idea of a single primæval language from which all others were derived was no longer plausible in the light of modern ethnological and linguistic studies. Kenrick's argument here, and the sheer vehemence of it,<sup>128</sup> revealed the strength of his Unitarian views,

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<sup>126</sup> John Kenrick, 'Forster's Primæval Language', Review Article of *The One Primæval Language, traced experimentally through Ancient Inscriptions, including the Voice of Israel from the Rocks of Sinai*, by the Rev. Charles Forster, Part 1 (London, 1851). –Part 2, *The Monuments of Egypt, and Their Vestiges of Patriarchal Traditio* (London, 1852), *PR*, vol. 9, 1853, pp. 33-48.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>128</sup> Kenrick's review of the work of Forster, who was clearly an exponent of unswerving religious orthodoxy, was probably the most scathing and aggressive he ever wrote. His parting shot was 'Had Mr. Forster merely failed in his attempt to solve a difficult historical problem, we should have passed a much less severe criticism on his work. But the tone of arrogance and bigotry by which it is disfigured, rendered it desirable to show how superficial is his knowledge and how inconsequential his reasoning. There is a want of moral courage among the critics of our country, when they give an account to the public of works which are likely to be favourites with those who call themselves the religious world. They are fearful of bringing on themselves the imputation of irreligion by freely exposing their faults; the praise they bestow is circulated far and wide by the puffing publisher, and a false reputation is created for their authors. It becomes a duty, therefore, for writers who are not subject to these influences to speak plainly, and as Mr.

particularly in opposition to the orthodox idea that divine inspiration should take precedence over all rational historical inquiry, in his mature thought.

In order to prove the first language as having generated Hebrew, Forster had to identify his primæval tongue with the very ancient Egyptian language. To do this, Kenrick alleged, Forster had denied the whole system of hieroglyphical interpretation which had been discovered by Jean Francois Champollion (1790-1832). Great credit had been bestowed upon the French linguist by the scientific fraternity when he had found the key to deciphering the Egyptian symbols. Kenrick wrote with acid pen that according to Forster, all of Champollion's work had been a delusion and his school were enemies of revealed religion. Against the Frenchman and his achievements it appeared it had been necessary for Forster 'to make an appeal to the English public and the Christian world'.<sup>129</sup>

There was a similar angry reaction on the part of Kenrick to the general drift of Bunsen's ideas and in his reviews of these Kenrick revealed that side of his nature which prioritised the defence of Unitarianism. In January, 1855, Kenrick reviewed a work of Bunsen<sup>130</sup> in which the German had referred to the 'dry Unitarianism' which had been incapable of explaining the history of Christ and which was nothing more than Deism with Christ as a moral model, or some form of 'latitudinarian Mohammedanism'.<sup>131</sup> Kenrick's reaction to this was

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Forster's appears to us to be decidedly one of these false reputations, we have not hesitated to say so, and to assign our reasons.' Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>129</sup> Kenrick, 'Forster's Primæval Language', p. 45.

<sup>130</sup> John Kenrick, 'Dr. Bunsen and his Critics', Review Article of *Hippolytus and his Age, or the Beginnings and Prospects of Christianity*, by C.C.J. Bunsen. Second edition, in two vols ( London, 1854 ), *CR*, vol. 11, January 1855, pp. 1-13.

<sup>131</sup> Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his Age*, vol. 1 p. 81, quoted by Kenrick, *ibid.*, p 12. Defending the nature of Christ as identical with that of the Divine nature, Bunsen wrote of Unitarianism as a negation of the Christian religion. To quote him in full, Bunsen wrote that 'The dry Unitarianism of the eighteenth century

predictable and Bunsen's description of Unitarianism as Deism modified by Christian morality he described bluntly as 'trite calumny'.<sup>132</sup> When, eight months later, his task was to consider Bunsen's opinions on the unity of humanity, and that the parent language had been invented by an individual. Kenrick wrote that

We must confess that we could more readily  
conceive of a single individual inventing piquet  
or battledore and shuttlecock than inventing language.  
It is essentially a social instrument.<sup>133</sup>

There was by mid-century a more aggressive and intolerant tone to Kenrick's arguments and to his reasoning in the face of the continued onslaught of orthodox ideas. After a lifetime of defending his faith against what he believed to be the unsound scholarship of orthodox clergymen this was probably not surprising. His expositions and reviews were infused also, however, with a new confidence, not only that which comes with maturity but also one which had been empowered by the rational voice of science. Thus when it came to the criticism of the 'single source' theory of language, his comments were scathing and his wit tinged with sarcasm because he knew his rational opinions on the Christian faith were in the process of being validated by the scientific authority of a new age.

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is the first real negation, and has proved itself to be as incapable of explaining the history of Christ, as the intellectual mystery of man and mankind. As religion, it cannot pretend to more than a latitudinarian Mohammedanism, or at most a denationalized Judaism' in short, to modern Deism, taking Christ as a moral model.' He did give Unitarians some credit, however, adding that 'Such, however, is not the Unitarianism of some of the present leaders of that denomination in England'. Here he would be referring to James Martineau, whose style of Unitarianism was more spiritual than that of his predecessors in the late eighteenth century. See chapter seven, below.

<sup>132</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen and his Critics', p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', pp. 529-530.

However, all these fresh ideas about language, its origins and the nature of its development, were not simply weapons in the continuing disputes between Unitarians and those of the orthodox persuasion. The whole idea of the separate origins of languages amongst ancient and primitive peoples had given voice to the Romantics who celebrated the original, creative genius of the *volk*. There developed the primitivist idea that purer forms of unique and diverse literary and artistic expression might emerge from simple, uncultured peoples who were untainted by civilisation.<sup>134</sup>

These new philological ideas also constituted an important tool for the historian of ancient cultures. They were used by Kenrick in two ways, firstly as a means to investigate the ancient tribes of Greece on the basis of the principle of the binding power of language. This power was instrumental in creating boundaries between peoples which could in turn reveal their origins, movements and affinities with others. The second way in which he used language in his history was to emphasise its importance as an integral part of a nation's past. He did this in his two major historical works, *Ancient Egypt Under the Pharaohs* (1850) and *Phoenicia* (1855), by giving over space for discussion in each of them to the language of these ancient nations.

Kenrick's approach to historical philology was evident in an article he wrote in 1832 for the *Philological Museum*,<sup>135</sup> the short-lived journal edited by the Germanophiles and 'liberal Anglicans'<sup>136</sup> J.C. Hare and Connop Thirlwall, who had been the translators of Niebuhr's *History of Rome* (1828). Kenrick's

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<sup>134</sup> John B. Halsted, *Romanticism* (London, 1969), p. 18.

<sup>135</sup> John Kenrick, 'On the Names of the Antehellenic Inhabitants of Greece', *PM*, vol. 1, 1832, pp. 609-627.

<sup>136</sup> See Duncan Forbes, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (Cambridge, 1952).



opinion was that at whatever time the Hellenes became a distinct people and extended their name over Greece it is certain that they bore 'traces and traditions of other tribes who had preceded them in it'.<sup>137</sup> Because it was language more than anything else which distinguished people from one another, he tried to seek out the original names of these tribes for 'they have for the most part left us nothing else'.<sup>138</sup>

It was this sense of linguistic *difference*, Kenrick argued, which had given the ancient tribes their names. It had been the exquisite fineness of the Hellenic ear which had led to an 'early appropriation of a distinguishing epithet to those who spoke less harmoniously than themselves'.<sup>139</sup> The names given by the Hellenes to the ancient tribes were the names of birds. With this in mind he used a combination of etymological and historical evidence to trace the wanderings of the Pelasgi to prove that they were a distinctive people who had been identified by the name of storks. This idea had been much debated by classicists, but Kenrick went on to speculate that such a name may have denoted their 'rudeness of speech',<sup>140</sup> for the stork was often charged with 'defective elocution ...was held to have no tongue at all....and, therefore the stork was especially adapted to represent a people of barbarous speech'.<sup>141</sup> True or false, what was important was that his analysis carefully dissected the languages and nature of the early tribes and clearly defined them as 'other nations', and separate peoples

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<sup>137</sup> Kenrick, 'Antehellenic Inhabitants of Greece', p. 609.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 611.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 615.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 613.

in their own right.<sup>142</sup> If later they were subsumed into the Hellenic world, there was no doubt in his mind that originally they had had unique identities, separate origins and their own characteristics and traditions. He had used the study of language, therefore, to expand the understanding of the history of ancient peoples and their origins.

His other use of language in his histories was to emphasise its importance as one factor alongside all the others which contribute to the formation of a nation. In both *Ancient Egypt* and *Phœnicia* the incorporation of specific sections on the subject of the nations' languages was indicative of his recognition of their importance. While in *Ancient Egypt*, language was discussed in the same section as population, in *Phœnicia* it received an entire chapter to itself. The early possession of cuneiform writing caused many scholars to believe that the Phœnicians actually invented the alphabet, which they later passed on to the Greeks.<sup>143</sup> Not only Greek, however, but also Hebrew and Egyptian owed a debt to the Phœnician language for elements of their own linguistic constructions and vocabularies. The idea behind the structure of Kenrick's analysis was to emphasise that the importance of language to a culture was no less than the religious, commercial, political and economic aspects of a nation's development. In a general sense, Kenrick believed that Phœnicia had been treated rather shabbily by some historians who held it up from a polemical point of view as an example of divine vengeance on the 'arrogance, the luxury and the selfishness which commercial prosperity engenders'. Yet, he added, no great nation of the

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 623.

<sup>143</sup> Kenrick, *Phœnicia*, p. 157.

ancient world conferred such benefits, including a linguistic one, on mankind and at the same time 'inflicted upon it so little injury'.<sup>144</sup>

If not as highly esteemed as Egypt or Greece in manufactures and arts Phœnicia left a legacy nevertheless, which appears to have been 'national and local'.<sup>145</sup> The Phœnicians worked in wood, gold and ivory and the characteristic ornaments were of 'native origin'.<sup>146</sup> Hiram's works at Jerusalem offered enough examples to allow us to appreciate and to judge the 'aesthetic character' of Phœnician art. Here Kenrick revealed his Romantic frame of mind with a critical appreciation of the creative abilities of a primitive, localised form of ancient 'folk art'. By doing so he was essentially rejecting neo-classical standards of taste in favour of an approach to aesthetics which was historical and Romantic in style.

This not only applied to aesthetics, but also to his treatment of literary criticism. His scattered comments on this subject are of great importance, for it is here that his Romantic spirit is often most clearly revealed. Kenrick rejected neo-classical standards of taste in favour of an approach to literature which was historical and therefore more Romantic in style. In relation to late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century literature and art the idea of neo-classicism was that art imitated nature. Consequently, the form of criticism applied was one which sought a norm or a universal ideal by which to evaluate the artistic production. It judged as near to perfect those classical standards of beauty as they had been

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 453-454.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

represented in the ancient world, for those, it was believed, were enduring models which could not be surpassed.<sup>147</sup>

However, as early as 1808, in an essay written at Glasgow,<sup>148</sup> there were indications that Kenrick had already begun to reject notions of the ideal in taste in favour of a more contextual evaluation of beauty. In his essay he wrote that 'There is no eternal immutable standard of things amiable, desirable or hateful and disgusting'.<sup>149</sup> These qualities, he believed, shifted from one object to another according to their relationship with the individual. Imagine the European ideal of beauty in the complexion and features of the European female as contrasted with disgust at those of the Negro. Yet if the natives of Guinea have a goddess or a personification of beauty, we may be assured that 'her characteristics are exactly what we consider as the essence of deformity'.<sup>150</sup>

This rejection of the universal standards of neo-classical taste appeared again three years later in Kenrick's article on the life and work of the German orientalist J.D. Michaelis.<sup>151</sup> Kenrick made an interesting comparison between Bishop Robert Lowth and Michaelis. Lowth, he wrote had been 'a man of refined taste' which had been formed entirely upon classical models, who 'judged of the

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<sup>147</sup> Howard Anderson and John S. Shea (eds.), *Studies in Criticism and Aesthetics, 1660-1800* (Minneapolis, 1967), p. 17. Many modern writers reject the term 'neo-classicism' as applied to this particular period of aesthetics. They prefer either the word 'classicism'. See *ibid*, pp. 16-17. Alternatively, they favour the term 'Grecian' in place of neo-classical. They argue that this is preferable because it benefits from contemporary usage, and it also differentiates from the preceding Augustan and subsequent Romantic ages with regard to taste and criticism. See John Buxton, *The Grecian Taste: Literature in the Age of Neo-Classicism 1740-1820* (London, 1978), pp. 2-3. Due to the fact that there is no agreement on a term for this literary age, here I shall stick to 'neo-classicism'.

<sup>148</sup> John Kenrick, 'Illustrations of the Origin of the Passions from the Doctrine of the Association of Ideas', 29 December, 1808, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.50 (d).

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>151</sup> John Kenrick, 'Sketch of the Life, Writings and Character of John David Michaelis, Professor of Philosophy at Göttingen', Part One, *MR*, vol. 6, January 1811, pp. 1-8, and Part Two, *MR* vol. 6, February 1811, pp. 65-71.

sacred writers by a classical standard and European ideas'. By contrast, Michaelis' philological researches were much more historical and rational than Lowth's, for the German 'could discover in the kindred dialects the meaning of an obscure Hebrew word'. Furthermore, he could understand the 'local allusions of the sacred writers' and estimate their merits more rationally than by comparison with Greek and Latin authors.<sup>152</sup>

From notes taken of Kenrick's lectures on *belles lettres*, read on his behalf at Manchester College, York, during his study year in Germany from 1819 to 1820, it would appear that his position on literary criticism was very similar.<sup>153</sup> These notes, taken by Richard Martineau, are not dated, but the fact that he was as a student at the college at that time in effect places them within this two year period.<sup>154</sup> Martineau noted Kenrick's opinion that although it had been the common method of critics to arrange different authors in divisions and to weigh their merits and demerits, of late 'criticism has emancipated itself from the arbitrary rule of these tyrants in literature' and now the author is judged 'according to the circumstances in which he wrote'.<sup>155</sup>

This theme was developed over the years at Manchester College and appears again in an expanded version in another set of lecture notes taken much later, at the close of Kenrick's teaching career in the years 1849-1853.<sup>156</sup> In

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., Part One, p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> Richard Martineau, Notes taken of John Kenrick's lectures on Belles Lettres at York, HMCL, MS. Misc. 7, fols. 106-266.

<sup>154</sup> Dennis Porter, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in Harris Manchester College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1998), p. 197.

<sup>155</sup> Martineau 'Notes on Belles Lettres', fol. 107.

<sup>156</sup> Robert Crompton Jones, Notes taken of lectures on Greek and Roman literature by John Kenrick at Manchester College, Manchester, between 1849 and 1853, HMCL, MSS. Misc. Notebooks 1-21, notebook

these, Kenrick's exposition was a great deal more precise. The history of literature, he told students, 'belongs to the study of general history not merely as an accessory but as an essential part'. It was a 'more immediate product of the mind than any other form in which it manifests itself'.<sup>157</sup> The common critical method had been to establish great classes, such as epic, lyric and dramatic poetry, oratory, and real and fictitious history, then to review all the most illustrious authors who cultivated them.

This form of criticism classed together and judged by abstract standards the productions of men who had lived in different ages. The standard was usually framed according to the notions of these ages in which the critics who cultivated them had lived and consequently they were far from being those times in which genius had been 'most vigorous and taste most pure'.<sup>158</sup> The French, Kenrick told his students, were the worst offenders. In the age of Louis XIV critics believed that the perfection of literature had been attained both in the earlier production of their own nation and in all the Greek and Roman classics, and this idea was in vogue 'until very recently'.<sup>159</sup>

Contrastingly, the historical method was the only fair way of judging an author's merits. The most original genius was not always the most correct because the flight of imagination had a close connection with the knowledge of his contemporaries. The spirit of modern criticism 'attends more to the life which

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3. This notebook consists of 148 pages bearing writing, none of which are numbered. See Porter *Manuscripts in HMCL*, p. 207. I have numbered the pages myself for the following references.

<sup>157</sup> Crompton Jones, 'Greek and Roman Literature', p. 1.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3 & 4.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

the outer garment covers than to the form and texture of the garment itself'.<sup>160</sup>

The notes read that

If beneath the rudest rhythm and the most unpolished  
diction there lies the expression of strong, natural feeling,  
of brilliant imagination, of vigorous power, it gives them  
a higher rank than the most cold correctness.<sup>161</sup>

In this Kenrick's exposition was very similar to that of August Wilhelm Schlegel, who wrote that we ought to recognise what ennobles human nature from, 'everything beautiful and great beneath the external garnishings'.<sup>162</sup> Poetry was the ability to devise the beautiful. It was a universal gift from heaven and where this internal excellence was present, 'one should not be concerned with superficiality'.<sup>163</sup> Schlegel added that everything ought to be traced back to the roots of our existence. If it came into being there then it had value, but if it was merely attached from the 'outside without a vital origin, then it can neither flourish nor experience true growth'.<sup>164</sup> His view was that criticism of poetry and the other arts could not be founded on 'the basic laws of the beautiful', which all of them are said to have in common.<sup>165</sup> To follow this kind of criticism 'scientific discussions are necessary,' which prove unattractive to those who want only to enjoy 'the productions of excellent minds'.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>162</sup> Schlegel, *Dramatic Art and Literature* (no page given) in Willson (ed.), *German Romantic Criticism*, p. 176.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

Likewise, Kenrick wrote that ‘the productions of human intellect cannot be brought under these strict plans of classification which are applied in science in the case of organised bodies’<sup>167</sup> Like Schlegel, Kenrick exposed the contrast between Enlightenment ideas of the science of man as part of nature and Romantic ideas concerning the essentially *human* sources of original genius. These were the emotion and imagination of men, which could not be appreciated or evaluated within the bounds of universal rules of classification. There are here also hints of a dualism which emphasises, in terms of literary appreciation, a gulf between the world of nature and the world of man.<sup>168</sup>

Similar themes appeared in the introduction to a series of lectures on English literature, this time in Kenrick’s own hand.<sup>169</sup> The notes were not dated and could have been written at any time in the 1830s or 1840s during Kenrick’s years of teaching at Manchester College. With regard to his approach to literary criticism, however, the material was consistent with the ideas revealed both in the early notes taken around 1819 to 1820 and in the much later ones written in the late 1840’s and early 1850’s. These notes were probably the ones from which later lectures were delivered and because they are Kenrick’s own they contain a deeper and more detailed exposition of his rejection of the neo-classical in favour of the Romantic in literary criticism.

Kenrick wrote that when, for example, we brought together under the general name of epic the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, *Paradise Lost* and

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<sup>167</sup> Crompton Jones, ‘Greek and Roman Literature’, p. 3.

<sup>168</sup> See chapter seven, below.

<sup>169</sup> John Kenrick, ‘Lectures on English Literature’, in two parts, UCL, Sharpe Papers 186/187. The pages in the notebook were numbered, but the items were not dated.



others, we did injustice to their authors by trying to apportion their merit by their approximation to some abstract definition of epic poetry. This mode of criticism tended to cherish a 'narrow and exclusive spirit in literature'.<sup>170</sup> Standards of excellence were formed according to the judgement and taste of the great ages of literature. The same disposition created arbitrary definitions and exacted conventional standards, and the practice was to treat with contempt what did not come up to these standards, 'whatever the poetical genius or mental power of the writer might be'.<sup>171</sup> None were more intolerant in this than the French, and it was not until Lessing in Germany raised the standard of revolt against this despotism, that 'more just and comprehensive principles of literary criticism began to prevail'.<sup>172</sup>

Kenrick's objective in this introduction to his lectures was to justify his intention to take a historical view of English literature. He believed that what he described as the 'ordinary method' of comparing author with author was 'trivial and unsatisfactory'.<sup>173</sup> He hoped, he wrote, to raise criticism to a higher rank by connecting it to history, 'to which it is capable of affording the most important illustration'.<sup>174</sup> It was through literature that we could find the best way of ascertaining what the men of that age and country really were. The literature of a nation is the pure product of the intellect and reflects 'a more distinct image of the mind than it is possible to derive from any other human work'.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

Lastly, he wrote that the productions of the human mind, and especially of the imagination, cannot be analysed and classified like 'material and organic bodies, in which, amidst their accidental varieties, certain generic and specific forms are invariably found'.<sup>176</sup> These productions of the mind 'refuse to be bound by these rigid laws by which, in the outer world, Nature maintains the uniformity of her works'.<sup>177</sup> The mind requires that our classes and definitions should be varied and enlarged for it 'has within itself a spring of action and a formative power, displaying itself from time to time in new creations'.<sup>178</sup> In this idea we may see reflected the tensions between eighteenth century neo-classicism and nineteenth century Romanticism. The first, which Kenrick rejected, is closely related to the uniformity, the abstract rules and the classificatory methods of the natural philosophy of the eighteenth century. The second, which he accepted, emphasises the varied, individual, creative power of man in history, the forms of which are essentially human, concrete, historical and real. The first is governed by general laws, the meaning of the second is to be discovered in the 'multiplicity of individual manifestations at different ages and in different cultures'.<sup>179</sup>

The neo-Kantian philosopher Wilhelm Windelband wrote that in his view the decisive factor in nineteenth century philosophy was the question as to the degree of importance which the 'natural-science conception of phenomena may claim for our view of the world and life as a whole'.<sup>180</sup> Like the Romantics, John Kenrick's perception of the role of the uniform in nature was that it could not

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 1

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Hans Meyerhoff, quoted (no page given) in John B. Halsted, *Romanticism* (London, 1969), p. 34.

<sup>180</sup> Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (New York, 1958), p. 624.

reflect the uniqueness of human forms or imagination and creative genius, all of which require different criteria for their evaluation. Although there were other factors involved, It was to a certain extent his appreciation of the intensity of linguistic uniqueness which drew him towards the idea of the separate origins of the world's languages. <sup>181</sup>

Kenrick's understanding of the changes in language over time revealed an appreciation of linguistic development as a natural, non arbitrary process. He was aware of the cohesive power of language on a society or a nation and its influence on the development of cultural uniqueness. The development of language was best conceived as an organic process because it was interdependent with thought and consequently it constituted an integral element in the growth of a society or a nation. It served as a useful tool for the study of history, fundamentally because all features of linguistic life were 'typical of every other form of the historical development of humanity'. <sup>182</sup> In literature, he rejoiced in the individual creative spirit of man and rejected those abstract, universal conventions of taste which had governed eighteenth century criticism. In rejecting the evaluation of the productions of man within the framework of the natural world he revealed the consciousness of a gulf between the natural and the human world and a dualism in his thought. <sup>183</sup> Consequently, Kenrick's whole approach to the study of language and literature reflected the historical and aesthetic consciousness of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>181</sup> For another perspective on this idea of separate origins, see chapter seven, below.

<sup>182</sup> Wilhelm Windelband, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 285.

<sup>183</sup> See chapter seven, below.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE ORIGINS OF MAN, SCIENCE AND RELIGION

By the mid-nineteenth century many intellectuals had realised that the discoveries of the new sciences of geology, ethnology, physiology and philology had cast grave doubts upon the literal truth of the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis. John Kenrick, as a Unitarian and a liberal theologian, was one of these who questioned the validity of the Old Testament narrative of mankind's beginnings. The Unitarian frame of mind, which favoured a rational historical interpretation of the Bible, was sceptical of any belief in the idea of an instantaneous creation of the world and of mankind. In 1821, Thomas Belsham (1750-1829) had challenged the idea of the unity and inspiration of the book of Genesis. In his usual blunt manner he made the point that if the history of the creation in Genesis had been inspired, then all the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo, Copernicus and Newton, were false, and 'all their demonstrations must be erroneous, which is impossible'.<sup>1</sup>

By mid century the beliefs of orthodoxy were facing even greater challenges. However, the terms of engagement between Kenrick and his old enemy had fundamentally changed. These changes had come about in relation to the effectiveness of the role of history. While in one sense it had become irrelevant, in another its usefulness was greater than ever. History, which had

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Belsham, *Reflections Upon the History of the Creation in the Book of Genesis, A Discourse delivered at Warrington, August 19, 1821, And Published at the Request of the Ministers of the Congregation* (London, 1821), p. 26.

previously been the chosen weapon of Unitarian biblical critics in their efforts to breach the bulwarks of the doctrines of orthodoxy, could not now be a force to be reckoned with on the question of the origins of mankind. In 1855 Kenrick wrote 'we must suppose a beginning somewhere; but we can never reach it by history'.<sup>2</sup> The distant origins of man were beyond the scope of the historian and consequently the rational biblical critic should be aware instead of the researches of 'sound physiologists' to prove his case.<sup>3</sup> The role of history was now superfluous in relation to the discovery of the truth about the 'single pair' theory of the origins of humanity.

Nevertheless, history did prove a crucial factor in the argument against any attempts to accommodate Genesis and nineteenth-century science. For John Kenrick, mindful as ever of his role as Unitarian historical biblical critic, the narrative of the creation was part of the traditions and beliefs of an ancient people. This meant that the Old Testament story was founded upon the worldview of a primitive culture and therefore could not be reconciled in any way with the precepts of nineteenth century science for 'the credibility of every historical writing must stand on its own ground'.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, in the debate about Genesis, the Unitarian interpretation of the Hebrew writings as the myth of this people rose to new heights of importance in the arguments presented by Kenrick.

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<sup>2</sup> John Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', Review Article of *Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History, Applied to Language and Religion*, by Christian Charles Josias Bunsen, D.D., D.C.S., D. Ph, in two volumes, London 1854, *CR*, vol. 11, 1855, pp. 525-53, quoted at p. 530. Kenrick noted, rather sarcastically 'We recommend this triple doctorate, in which "there are not three Doctors, but one Doctor," to the advocates of the Trinity, as a substitute for some of their worn-out illustrations', *ibid.*, quoted at p. 525.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> John Kenrick, *Primæval History* (London, 1846), p. xviii.

These two factors regarding the role of history in Kenrick's interpretation of Genesis in the mid-nineteenth century had very different implications. The failure of the historical approach with regard to the discovery of the origins of mankind led John Kenrick to a scientific and biological alternative form of inquiry which in turn linked his thought with the racial theories of the later nineteenth century. The Unitarian view of the historicity of the Hebrew writings, however, had crucial implications for Kenrick's theological and philosophical ideas, which caused them to become detached from the fundamental tenets of the radical English Enlightenment.

The first part of the following discussion will explore Kenrick's ideas about the origins of man, some reasons for his conclusions and the implications of these. The second part of the chapter will show how, in a more general sense, his Unitarian historical biblical approach to the problem of Genesis in the face of the new scientific discoveries of the mid-nineteenth century helped to bring about major changes in his own philosophical and religious positions.

Firstly, however, it is necessary to set out some of the background to one of the most potent arguments of the time, one which encompassed different views about the origins of the human race and its composition. In the pre-Darwinian mid-nineteenth century the belief that mankind was made up of different races, or indeed even of several species, which had originated in various parts of the world represented a polygenetic idea of the nature of humanity.<sup>5</sup> This was a *biological* perspective on the question of human origins.

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<sup>5</sup> There are some variations on this word, and on its opposite, monogenist. For example, in Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971) p. 9, monogenesis, polygenesis, and monogenesisist and

The polygenetic view contrasted fundamentally with a belief in the unity of mankind and that the origins of humanity had been a single pair. This latter view was a monogenetic <sup>6</sup> concept of the origins of man and concurred with the orthodox Christian belief in Genesis and the unity of the human race. The majority view of the time, it also tended to support the Enlightenment idea that the reasons for the diversity of human racial characteristics were fundamentally climatic and *environmental*. <sup>7</sup>

The intellectual background to the emergence of different attitudes to humanity's beginnings at this time was a melting pot of diverse and contradictory theological and scientific ideas. The ramparts of religious orthodoxy were assailed on all sides by the conclusions of the new linguistic, geological, ethnological and physiological sciences. As we have seen, <sup>8</sup> many philologists tended to note the diversity rather than the common factors of language, and many, like Kenrick, believed in different origins for the major linguistic groups. The Scot Charles Lyell (1797-1875) had shown in 1830 in his *Principles of Geology* that the features of the earth's surface had been formed by natural processes over a very long period of time. Lyell's conclusions flew in the face of Christian orthodoxy, for still in vogue amongst many such theologians in the mid-century decades was the belief that the world was only a few thousand years old.

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polygenetic are used. In Michael Biddiss (ed), *Images of Race* (Leicester, 1979), p. 17, the choice is monogenesis and polygenesis with monogenist and polygenist. I have decided to use the combination of monogenism and polygenism along with monogenist and polygenist. As adjectives I shall use monogenetic and polygenetic to save confusion with the nouns. See Hannah Franzisca Augstein (ed.), *Race: The Origins of an Idea, 1760-1850* (Bristol, 1996), pp. ix-xxxiii.

<sup>6</sup> See note 2, above.

<sup>7</sup> Augstein (ed.), *Race*, p. xiii. Biddiss, *Images of Race*, p.17.

<sup>8</sup> See chapter six, above.

By the mid-nineteenth century, ethnology in Britain had been dominated for almost three decades by the work and ideas of the Bristol doctor James Cowles Prichard (1786-1848), who firmly believed that there was one single human species.<sup>9</sup> An Anglican who had been inspired by the Evangelical Revival in England, his objective was to prove that the story of Genesis was true and that all races of men had descended from one single pair. Of Quaker parentage, Prichard was a monogenist until the end of his life, but unlike most who agreed with him, Prichard initially criticised the theory that climate was responsible for human diversity. Rather, he thought that the reason for human physiological diversity had been sudden variations in the hereditary fabric.<sup>10</sup> Prichard's original argument was that all mankind had originally been black and that racial difference had been brought about by civilisation. Later, however, he modified this to admit that climate may after all have played some part in physical diversity.<sup>11</sup> Fundamentally, however, his ideas claimed that all mankind had emerged from a single source and he emphasised the common factors between races rather than the differences.

The opposing view of the polygenists, whose thoughts on different races had always been distasteful to orthodox Christianity, had found strength initially in the opinions of the Scottish philosopher Lord Kames (1696-1782). His ideas on the polygenetic origins of North American Indians had been discussed at lectures given by the Scottish Enlightenment thinker Dugald

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<sup>9</sup> Prichard's *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (1813) was expanded into a five volume work (1836-47), and his *Natural History of Man* was published in 1843.

<sup>10</sup> Augstein (ed.), *Race*, p. xxiv.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



Stewart (1753-1828). Prichard had staunchly fought against such ideas all his life, but at the time of his death in 1848, just two years after John Kenrick had published his work *An Essay on Primaeval History*, it was clear that he had lost the battle. The polygenists, although generally in the minority, were putting up a fierce polemic for their views. The environmental explanation for human diversity had been persistently challenged well before mid-century by thinkers who believed in the biological determinism of races and who tended to see humanity's origins in polygenetic terms.

In the 1840s the Scottish anatomist Robert Knox (1791-1862), a polygenist, lectured in England on 'The Races of Men' and these talks were collated in a work of the same name published in 1850. Knox's view of race was a biological one. According to him the theories of eighteenth-century naturalists were wrong. Races could not interbreed successfully and the mixed race was destined to weaken and die.<sup>12</sup> Knox wrote that 'By intermarriage a new product arises which cannot stand its ground' and consequently the descendants will fall back on the stronger race and all traces of the weaker race 'must in time be obliterated'.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Knox was pessimistic about theories of universal human progress because he insisted that no race could overcome the limits of its own hereditary characteristics. He criticised the historian T.B. Macaulay for his contention that the 'pitiable state of the Irish is owing to their religion'. Religion had nothing to do with it, for the same Celtic characteristics embraced those of different religious persuasions and therefore, wrote Knox in his blunt style, 'It is the race, then, and

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<sup>12</sup> Augstein(ed.), *Race*, p. xxxi.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Knox, *The Races of Men : A Philosophical Enquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies of Nations* (1852) no page given, quoted by Augstein (ed.), *Race*, p. 253.

not the religion'.<sup>14</sup> His theory on racial determinism had brought him to the opinion that 'race is in human affairs everything ....in a word, civilisation – depends on it'.<sup>15</sup>

Although Knox was on the fringes of nineteenth-century ethnological thinking, there is no doubt that by the 1840s ideas such as these had begun to emerge as an alternative to notions of the unity of mankind as descendents of a single pair. The other branch of the new sciences which had given force to the arguments of the polygenists was phrenology. The three decades from 1820 to 1850 saw intense interest in this study which had been pioneered by the Dutchman, Pieter Camper. Phrenologists believed that there was a direct correlation between the contours of the skull and the mental faculties of mankind. The most influential, the Scot George Combe (1788-1858),<sup>16</sup> emphasised the relevance phrenology had to the study of race.<sup>17</sup>

The decade of the 1840s, during which Prichard revised his work *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* and published a fourth edition<sup>18</sup> saw the beginnings of a polarisation of views about the origins of mankind and the equality, or otherwise, of different races. It was at this time that the Ethnological Society, which had maintained for decades its Prichardian views

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 242-243.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Knox, *The Races of Men: A Fragment* (1850), no page given, quoted by Biddiss (ed.) *Images of Race*, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Biddiss, *Images of Race*, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Combe's major works on the subject were *Essays on Phrenology* (1819) and *The Constitution of Man* (1828). See David de Guistino, *Conquest of Mind : Phrenology and Victorian Social Thought* (London, 1975). This work gives a fascinating and comprehensive account of the study of 'head reading' in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Phrenology, it was believed, provided important clues to many human psychological and racial characteristics.

<sup>18</sup> George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* ( New York, 1987), p. 63. See also Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, pp. 4 -7.

about the unity of humanity and the 'single pair' theory of human origins, started to go into decline. The newer conclusions about the nature of man began to build foundations for the racial theories of the later nineteenth century.

In 1856 a young writer on the subject of human speech named James Hunt joined the society and six years later formed the rival Anthropological Society of London, which was much more generally inclined to the polygenist and racialist ideas of its founder. Hunt's view was that the older ethnology, which he saw as merely 'the history or science of races',<sup>19</sup> had been overtaken by anthropology, which he described as the 'science of the whole nature of man'.<sup>20</sup> This new science would transcend the Prichardian ethnological method which, with the Bible in mind, had tried to iron out the differences between the races. From the mid-1850s Hunt denied the uniformity of mankind, either in origins or development. His views, which he himself declared had been 'imbibed from the late Dr Knox',<sup>21</sup> were grounded in the ideas of racial inequalities and differences. Indeed some time later, in 1866, Hunt argued that while Britain had an empire she had to take account of these differences because of the impossibility of applying 'the civilisation and laws of one race to another race of man essentially distinct'.<sup>22</sup> The gradual decline of the older society and the rise of the new represented a parting of the ways between a view of mankind's origins founded upon religious belief, and one which had an approach to the questions of the

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<sup>19</sup> James Hunt, quoted by Stocking, (no page given) *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 248. For a brief account of the formation of the Anthropological Society of London see Stocking, pp. 246-248.

<sup>20</sup> Hunt quoted in *ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>22</sup> James Hunt, Third Annual Address, *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London*, vol. 4, 1866, p. lxxviii, quoted by Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 4.

birth and development of humanity which was centred upon the findings of the linguistic, anthropological, physiological and geological sciences.

The conclusions of these new sciences which more often than not clashed with the beliefs of orthodox Christianity, meant that by the mid- nineteenth century the ethnological arguments had entered a cul-de-sac. Based upon the perceived infallibility of the Hebrew manuscripts, and despite the findings of Charles Lyell, most orthodox Christians believed that the world was only about six thousand years old. This short chronological span supported a *historical* argument for monogenism, for the shorter the timescale the easier it would be to trace peoples back to their common original source. The longer the estimated period of man on earth, the harder that task would be, for the single pair and their origins would be lost in the mists of the very ancient past.

Paradoxically, however, the idea of a short chronology seriously undermined any *biological or scientific* arguments in favour of monogenism itself, for the shorter man's time on earth the more difficult it was to imagine how such diversity in the physical and mental characteristics of races had come about. Thus the mainstream Enlightenment argument in favour of the unity of man, which generally concurred with the beliefs of orthodox Christianity and which held that physical differences between peoples had been determined by climate, environment and circumstances, was seriously weakened by the biblical chronology which shortened the period of man's existence on earth. Indeed, in the light of the new scientific inquiries, it was clear that two core beliefs of orthodox Christianity, the first in the unity of mankind, the second in the infallibility

of the ancient scriptures which had suggested that mankind had only existed on earth for six thousand years, were in apparent contradiction.

One thing was certain, however. There was no historical evidence of the diffusion of the human species from a single source, and although it was true that popular orthodox beliefs about the origins of mankind from a single pair may be found in many traditions, this proved nothing. The idea of a single pair was so obvious an answer to the question of origins that this argument carried very little real weight. To reverse the process by which people multiplied and to trace them back to the 'simplest combination out of which increase can arise' was no proof of a real reminiscence of a fact.<sup>23</sup> Such legends were so purely local and so intimately connected with the manners, production and language of the region in which they were found that they led one to the conclusion that they had been independently formed. Their resemblance on the one point of supposing a 'single pair the origin of the whole race' was to be explained by the above cause.<sup>24</sup> The historical argument, therefore, was ineffective in proving the 'single pair' theory either true or false.

As there could never be any historical proofs for any aspect of the diverse arguments, the biological approach became the more rational way of dealing with the problem. It became clear that this was the path chosen by Kenrick. In an article in which he discussed the work of the Swiss geologist and naturalist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), Kenrick wrote that this 'distinguished philosopher' had called into question the common belief of the origin of the human race from a

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<sup>23</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

single pair. Agassiz had maintained the opinion 'very general we imagine among physiologists...that many varieties, and many pairs of each variety, of the human species, were placed on different part of the earth by the Creator'.<sup>25</sup> Such an opinion, Kenrick observed, struck 'at the very foundations of orthodox theology'.<sup>26</sup> The tone of this passage gave more than a hint that Kenrick warmed to this idea. Not only would he have been in favour of such a theory because of its inevitable impact upon orthodox belief, but also because it appeared to be the opinion of many scientists that this was a much more rational and likely scenario than the idea of a single pair as ancestors of the entire human race.

It was within this framework of conflicting opinions in the mid-nineteenth century that the biological ideas of the polygenists began to gain ground. There were several characteristics to be found in a truly polygenetic thinker. Because the major races of mankind displayed so many linguistic and physiological differences, the polygenist, far from supporting the 'single pair' theory, viewed mankind as being composed of different species who could not interbreed with sufficient success to ensure long-term fertility. The diversity of humankind caused polygenists to reject the Enlightenment-based climate theory and rather to insist that men's physiological differences were caused by the fact they originated as diverse species in different places. The polygenist emphasised the differences, discrepancies and inequalities between races, an approach to the subject which was compatible with the notion of the 'stability' of races. This was the idea that a

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<sup>25</sup> John Kenrick, 'Religion and Geology', Review Article of *The Religion of Geology and its Connected Sciences*, By Edward Hitchcock, President of Amherst College, and Professor of Natural Theology and Geology (Boston, 1851), *PR*, vol. 7, 1851, p. 466.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

race, once established, changed little over time. This view would also accord with the polygenist theory of racial determinism, the belief that a race was restricted within the limits of its own hereditary characteristics, and could never overcome them.<sup>27</sup>

How close did John Kenrick's ideas come to polygenism?

On the question of species it would appear he favoured a compromise between polygenetic and monogenetic views. His ideas on the subject of racial differences in general only ever appeared in detail in his work *Primæval History*, published in 1846, and in a few articles which appeared in the early 1850s. Before that he mentioned virtually nothing on the topic. However, in an early essay, written in 1808,<sup>28</sup> he wrote in an aesthetic context of the differences between the features of the European and Negro females.<sup>29</sup> It was not until twenty-eight years later, in 1836, that he mentioned the topic again, this time in a sermon preached before the Western Unitarian Society in Bristol.<sup>30</sup> His views on the nature of mankind reflected some ideas he presented later on the subject of the definition of species. Appropriately for a sermon, his emphasis first and foremost was on the 'great facts which are the everlasting basis of the Gospel, as a revealed religion' and the 'universal brotherhood of the human race'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Biddiss, *Images of Race*, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> John Kenrick, 'Illustrations of the Origin of the Passions from the Doctrine of the Association of Ideas', 29 December, 1808, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.50 (d).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> John Kenrick, *The Authority of Jesus, as a divinely inspired Teacher, sufficient for the Evidence and Efficacy of Christianity, A Sermon Preached Before the Western Unitarian Society at Lewin's Mead Meeting, Bristol, August 18, 1836* (Bristol, 1836).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

He told his audience that such facts were admitted alike by men who may seem 'wide as the poles asunder'.<sup>32</sup> At first men may not seem to have anything in common, but on closer inspection we recognised their characteristics as those of the varied 'tribes of men', who have different languages, stature and complexion. However, the same framework of the body, vital organs, intellectual powers and affections were 'possessed by all'.<sup>33</sup> The first impulse of the savage, he wrote, was to treat the man of a different nation or colour 'as if he were of a different species; but as he knows him better, his heart expands towards him'.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, Kenrick's concept of the races of men is that although there were great differences between them, they were all basically formed in the same way and were consequently of the same species.

This is the same general idea as he later suggested in his outline of the argument on the meaning of species in *Primæval History*, published in 1846, when he criticised the orthodox Christian idea of mankind's descent from a single pair. In his summary of the argument of the 'single pair' theory, he wrote that the 'Variety of form and colour which the human race now exhibit' begs the question as to whether humankind was composed of different races of separate origins or was descended from one primary form from which they have deviated 'under the influence of soil, climate, food, and the other circumstances by which the condition of men is diversified'.<sup>35</sup> He continued 'There is one *species* of man, if

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>35</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p.12.



we take the word in its popular sense'.<sup>36</sup> This meant an aggregate of qualities transmissible by descent, and so invariably found together, 'that where we perceive the existence of one we infer the rest without disappointment or uncertainty'.<sup>37</sup>

In his notes Kenrick cites two other definitions of the term *species*, one by the French zoologist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) for whom it meant all who were descended from a 'common parentage' and the other from the monogenist Prichard, who envisaged it as distinctness of race 'evinced by the constant transmission of some characteristic peculiarity or organisation'.<sup>38</sup> It was perfectly understandable, Kenrick wrote, that the print of human footsteps in the sand would lead an observer to conclude that these were beings of the same physical, intellectual and moral sympathies as himself. It would also appear that all these qualities are found together, differing only in degree. Furthermore, in every part of the world, notwithstanding their differences, human beings of different colours and types may successfully multiply.

It was also argued, Kenrick wrote, that according to the analogy of nature, individuals of the same species, however numerous or widely diffused, appear to originate from one stock rather than many. From this it was believed that the human race had its origin in a single pair, all the varieties having been subsequently introduced.<sup>39</sup> This analogy, however, has no foundation in fact, for

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., note 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14.

'we have no historical proof of such a division of species from a single centre'.<sup>40</sup>

In other words, it does seem the case that there is one species of man, and different varieties, but there is no way of knowing if all human beings were descended from a single pair because we cannot prove it historically.

His clearest statement on species as unitary with variations came later, in 1855. He wrote that

Surely, in the view of common sense, creatures of the same form, organs and structure, subject to the same physiological and pathological laws, possessing the same faculties of reason and conscience, freely uniting with each other and becoming parents of a self-perpetuating race, must be reckoned to belong to the same species, even though blue, pink and green should be added to the varieties of colour which already prevail among them.<sup>41</sup>

This shows that he believed all men, although varied, to be fundamentally of the same species and having the same general physical characteristics, and furthermore, they were therefore able to interbreed successfully.

The fact that there were many different varieties of mankind was not at issue, neither was the contention that they all belonged to the one common fundamental species. The crucial questions were : had they all come from the same single source with variations occurring later, and if so, how did this come about ; or had these different races of man begun their existence in separate

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', p. 529.

parts of the world? On the question of the climate theory as an overall explanation, Kenrick noted that unless there was intermarriage, there was no tendency among white races living in climates where the population was black to approach the colour of the natives. The 'trifling infuscation' produced by exposure to the sun was confined to individuals and the 'children are born and grow up as fair as in temperate climates'.<sup>42</sup> Neither was there any evidence that the Negro race living in North America ever approached the colour of whites, although other peculiarities are said to wear out in those 'who are the most perfectly domesticated'.<sup>43</sup>

Although it was impossible to discern from the effects of heat the causes of diversity in humankind, there was nevertheless a general conformity between colour and climate. Kenrick wrote that the peculiarities of the Negro were not always found in complete combination, for it was certainly true that the peoples of the deepest black were to be discovered in the equatorial and tropical regions of the old world, while 'tawney and fair-complexioned races appear successively, as we ascend to higher latitudes.'<sup>44</sup> The apparent exceptions to this generalisation, he explained were due to the 'different elevations of tracts which lie beneath the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 18

<sup>43</sup> On this point Kenrick quotes Samuel Stanhope Smith, an American churchman and Princeton academic. Stanhope Smith's work, *An Essay on the Causes of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, was originally an oration given to the American Philosophical Society on 27 February 1787. A greatly expanded text was published in 1810. The essay followed the arguments of the monogenists, that humankind had emerged from one source and that different varieties of race and complexion had been caused by climate and other factors such as social conditions. It was written to counter the arguments of the polygenist Lord Kames whose idea was that God had created different races of men so that they could flourish in different climatic environments. This argument is contained in Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 4 vols (Glasgow, 1802). This early controversy set the scene for the arguments which developed between monogenists and polygenists as the century progressed. Kames' theories were attacked by some because they implicitly denied the possibility of the perfectibility of mankind due to the fact that the characteristics of various races would be determined and bound by their own climates.

<sup>44</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 19.

same parallels'.<sup>45</sup> He concluded that we might suppose that these races had a separate stock, and, as their shades and colours were endless, the number of these stocks would be infinite. Alternatively, it was not entirely wrong to suppose that climate might have in some way produced these diversities, but

we may safely say, that if all the varieties which we see have been superinduced upon a common stock, a very long period must be allowed to accomplish this....It is only, therefore, by a very great enlargement of the common chronology, that we can avoid the conclusion of an original diversity of race.<sup>46</sup>

Thus although Kenrick did not actually deny the possibility of mankind having been descended from one pair or that climate could have produced such amazing diversity in mankind, nothing could be proved by history. Biology and time remained as the only two factors around which any speculation might be formed. Consequently if we were to hold to the Hebrew chronology of a few thousand years, then the only conclusion was that the different varieties of mankind originated separately in different parts of the world. The idea of separate origins for the different varieties of mankind conformed in many respects to his general frame of mind. He believed that myths had separate local origins<sup>47</sup> and also that the main groups of human languages had originated in separate locations.<sup>48</sup> As a Unitarian biblical critic he had always been directed

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>47</sup> See chapter five, above.

<sup>48</sup> See chapter six, above.

towards the search for the origin of truth. Consequently his was a mind which sought the true beginnings and the sources of things, untainted by any abstract notions, which in this case were founded upon orthodox belief in the single pair theory.

His views on the origins of races received some keen attention in a contemporary journal.<sup>49</sup> The reviewer saw Kenrick's comments on the separate origins of man as in opposition to writers such as Prichard, Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865), who became Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster in 1850, and Johann Blumenbach (1752-1840), the German anthropologist whose lectures Kenrick had attended during his studies in Göttingen in 1819-1820 and with whom he had occasionally socialised.<sup>50</sup> Blumenbach, like the others, believed in the descent of man from a single pair and in human unity. He argued that all the major races had been descended from a single Caucasian type which had subsequently 'degenerated' under the influence of climate.<sup>51</sup>

Nicholas Wiseman was one of a group of clerical writers who included the Anglican theologians John Bird Sumner (1780-1862), Richard Whately (1787-1863) and the geologist Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873), all of whom, apart from Sumner, went on record to oppose Darwin's *Origin of Species*. These writers all assumed the orthodox biblical tradition in their anthropological speculations which regarded as fundamental a belief in man's descent from one pair who had

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<sup>49</sup> B. Fellowes, 'An Essay on Primaeval History', Review Article, *PR*, vol. 2, 1846, pp. 243-250.

<sup>50</sup> Notes of the Early Part of the Life of the Rev. John Kenrick, written by him for his Wife in 1870-1872, copied by his niece Elizabeth Reid in 1878, UCL, Sharpe Papers 191, pp. 57-59.

<sup>51</sup> Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach* (Boston, 1978). This edition is a reprint of the 1865 edition and contains also *The Inaugural Dissertation of John Hunter M.D. on the Varieties of Man*. Blumenbach's work was translated by Thomas Bendyshe. See pp. 205-276 on the degeneration of the human types.

been formed in the act of creation, the unity of man, his recent appearance on earth and the 'degeneration' of non-Christian peoples.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, Kenrick's ideas were recognised at the time to have been in opposition to the received wisdom on the single pair theory.

Kenrick's thoughts on the origins of the races of man as being separate were supported by his views on the inherent stability of racial types and the great differences between them. In relation to the permanent features of races Kenrick presents one of the most common arguments used by supporters of the polygenetic view. Where no intermixture of races had taken place, he wrote, the differences between them are 'no less marked than they were three thousand years ago'.<sup>53</sup> He observed that

The Negro, with all his peculiarities of form, colour and hair, appears just the same in the paintings of the age of Thothmes iii, fifteen centuries before the Christian era, as he is seen now in the interior of Africa.<sup>54</sup>

Clearly then, if we assumed a single origin for humanity, how is it possible that such radical changes as are manifested in the Negro race could have taken place over time if three thousand years ago his form and colour were exactly the same as they are now? It is undeniable, wrote Kenrick, that the idea of adaptation to climate is to be taken into account with regard to the Negro races. However, how much influence may we assign in respect of racial differences to

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<sup>52</sup> Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 44.

<sup>53</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

climate, soil, food and modes of life in general to bring about the differences in the physical, intellectual and moral peculiarities of the different races of men? We have no means of comparing the same race of people under altered circumstances and, even if we did, we have no way of assessing which complex causes have brought about such alterations. On the question of racial changes over time he adopted an essentially polygenetic argument when he wrote that

the survey of those races whose successive conditions we can ascertain, presents to us rather the proofs of the tenacity with which nature adheres to her established forms, than the flexibility with which she varies them <sup>55</sup>

In other words, the mental and physical attributes of a particular race are more likely to remain static over time than to alter under the influence of environment or circumstance. This view of the stability of races was, for example, in direct contrast to the opinion of Robert Chambers, the amateur Scottish geologist who published anonymously his *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in 1844. <sup>56</sup> Chambers' view was that in the space of a few generations a tribe or nation could be either advanced or degraded very rapidly by the influence of the conditions under which it lived. Chambers wrote that 'the style of living is ascertained to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> See Robert Chambers, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation and Other Evolutionary Writings* (Chicago, 1994). This edition is edited by James A Secord. There was much controversy at the time about Chambers' work and great speculation as to by whom it had been written. For the very first time a writer had made creation the subject of natural history.

have a powerful effect in modifying the human figure in the course of generations, and this even in its osseous structure'.<sup>57</sup>

For Kenrick, however, races where intermarriage was not a factor remained very much the same in their physiological make-up over time, and the differences between them were great. It was the differences rather than any common factors which interested him and he wrote that the division of the inhabitants of the ancient world into the Caucasian, the Calmuck and the Ethiopian varieties 'has the advantage of being founded on obvious differences'.<sup>58</sup> These divisions were 'well adapted to history'<sup>59</sup> and therefore a great deal more convincing than the theory that mankind had been descended from a single pair.

The differences between races were distinctive. The Caucasian, wrote Kenrick, had an oval skull and a perpendicular facial angle, and in addition had a stature and frame 'fitter to give the highest combination of strength and agility'.<sup>60</sup> To this race belonged all the nations most remarkable in ancient history, from the Indians and Persians to the Assyrians, the Greeks, the Romans and the inhabitants of modern Europe. The Mongolian, or Calmuck, variety was characterised by a broad face, produced by 'the great lateral extension of the bony arch which unites the cheek bone to the skull', giving to the countenance something of a lozenge shape.<sup>61</sup> The Finns in Europe, the nomadic nations of Northern and Central Asia, the Japanese and the Chinese belong to this type. He

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>58</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. 20.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 22.



wrote also that those of China and Japan may be regarded as the most perfect specimens of this race, while in the Eskimos and the Finns its characteristics are the 'most repulsive, and accompany the lowest state of intellect and manners'.<sup>62</sup> Mongolian civilisation was generally unknown to ancient writers and only came into their view when the Huns effected 'the most remarkable revolution which the world has undergone', and overthrew the Roman Empire and settled in Western Europe.<sup>63</sup>

In his short analysis of the characteristics of the Mongolian races, Kenrick suggested that China and Japan, who have the best examples of this type, exhibit a social state not inferior to that of ancient Egypt and India. In this brief sentence there is the hint of the idea of the comparative method of historical understanding. This was the notion presented by some historians of the Scottish Enlightenment, that in the absence of concrete historical evidence, one could bring the distant past to life by comparing it with primitive peoples who lived in the present. Consequently the historian could, by conjecture, recreate the times of ancient peoples who had left no record of their own lives and cultures.<sup>64</sup>

Clearly, however, despite his comparison between contemporary China and Japan and the two ancient nations of Egypt and India, there is little indication that Kenrick had much enthusiasm for this particular historical method. In his

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> J.W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society. A Study in Victorian Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 10-16. The method of conjecture and of comparative history was characteristic of some Scottish historians, in particular Adam Ferguson and John Millar. However, one of the clearest examples of this form of methodology was the work of John Ferguson McLennan, *Studies in Ancient History, Comprising a Reprint of Primitive Marriage. An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies* (London, 1876). McLennan's volume was first published in Edinburgh in 1865 and professed to be a study of contemporary races in their primitive condition as a guide towards aspects of the history of early societies.

assessment of the third of the world's racial types, the Ethiopic, Kenrick wrote of the equatorial African that he had

the blackest colour, the most woolly hair, the lowest facial angle, the smallest average quantity of brain and *medulla oblongata*, and a frame of inferior agility and strength. Where this variety reaches its extreme point of deviation, as in the Negro of the countries south of the Great Desert, it seems to be accompanied with a degeneracy of the intellectual powers, which has condemned this race to be, in all historic times, the slaves of Europeans and Asiatics.<sup>65</sup>

This opinion of the sub-Saharan African was in no sense unique, being shared by many Victorians. Indeed such comments reflected much of the opinions of Africa and the Africans who were in this period thought by many anthropologists to be inferior both physically and mentally to the lighter skinned races, particularly Europeans. Despite the protestations of the monogenist J.C. Prichard, within the broader social context it was more often than not accepted that the European idea of civilisation was far superior to that of primitive peoples such as Africans, who were somehow 'separate' from northern races.<sup>66</sup>

However, Kenrick's comments reveal a disinclination on his part to accept the fundamental requirement of the comparative historian. That was a belief in a concept of human development as a predictable, unilinear process whereby it

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<sup>65</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>66</sup> Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, pp. 6-8. See also Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 63.

was assumed that all cultures would finally reach the same level of achievement and civilisation. This idea of the uniformity of human progress tended to be an Enlightenment notion which was also linked to the orthodox Christian belief in the unity of humanity and its source in a single pair. John Kenrick, however, having decided that in biological terms it was more likely that the races of man had separate origins, would find it easier to speculate that not all human varieties would then proceed towards the same form and degree of civilisation.

From his writings on Africa it is possible to detect in Kenrick's thought a clear indication of the idea of racial determinism, which was an important trait of polygenetic thought. Although the state of Africa south of the Sahara was dealt with only briefly in *Primæval History*, Kenrick enlarged upon the topic in an essay entitled 'Causes Which Have Retarded the Civilisation of Africa', probably written in the 1840s.<sup>67</sup> There are three important factors in the essay which are worth consideration. The first is Kenrick's opinion that the African race was inferior. The second is that the reasons for this inferiority were in some respects innate to that race rather than entirely due to climate and environment. The third is that due to this inferiority the African race would therefore not necessarily develop along the same path as that trodden by the European.

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<sup>67</sup> John Kenrick, 'Causes Which Have Retarded the Civilisation of Africa', Kenrick Papers, DWL, 24.107.49 (a). The essay is contained in a bundle of papers which were read before societies. It is, like many of Kenrick's personal notes and papers, undated, but was probably written in the 1840s, perhaps about the same time as he was engaged in the writing of *Primæval History*. It was certainly written after 1841. On page 13 of the paper Kenrick mentioned an ill-fated expedition to the Congo in 1841 during which the travellers had been ravaged by tropical diseases. The journey had been taken at the suggestion of the social reformer Sir Thomas Buxton (1786-1845). Buxton was MP for Weymouth from 1818 to 1837. He worked for the abolition of the slave trade and in 1824 succeeded Wilberforce as head of the anti-slavery party. Buxton suggested the expedition should take place because he believed that tribal chiefs could be persuaded to exchange the slave trade for a more legitimate form of commerce.

Kenrick defined civilisation as 'the improved state of the arts of life'.<sup>68</sup> Nearest to this condition were the northern regions of Africa and those civilisations in Tunis, Tripoli, Algeria and Morocco which were brought from Asia in the seventh century after Christ. These regions, like the southern extremity of the continent, had been colonised in some parts by Europeans. Considering some areas of the vast continent on a comparative basis Kenrick noted that the 'kingdom of Abyssinia, though it would have been reckoned barbarous for Europe, is civilised for Africa'.<sup>69</sup> However, from there to the Cape, all down the Western side of Africa 'there is not a single tribe that has made any considerable progress in the arts of life.'<sup>70</sup> The African, wrote Kenrick, had no system of agriculture, made no clothing or metals with which to manufacture tools. Medicine consisted of only the simplest remedies. Law, legislation and jurisprudence had never advanced beyond the earliest forms of the social union. Force ruled, everywhere life and property were insecure and the whole of society was characterised by instability and violent change.

'Nowhere', he wrote, do we find a native tribe that has devised itself an alphabet, or even advanced to pictorial writing',<sup>71</sup> and consequently the past, beyond the narrow limits of memory, was lost. Science was unknown, and the idea of a law of nature, an invariable sequence of cause and effect, had never entered the mind of the native African for whom 'the wildest superstition takes the

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<sup>68</sup> Kenrick, 'Civilisation of Africa', p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

place of philosophy'.<sup>72</sup> As to languages, they were imperfect, scant in vocabulary and poorly developed in terms of forms and inflections. The productions of the arts of sculpture and music were 'coarse and grotesque'.<sup>73</sup>

Consequently, he wrote, we were justified in asserting that where African tribes had not received an infusion of European civilisation they remained in a state of barbarism. This had always been the case, for there were no traces of a past civilisation in Africa. In the Egyptian tomb paintings of 4,000 years ago the black Africans carry only the simplest offerings of their soil, the log of ebony and the elephant's tusk. They lead animals and carry gold dust, the ostrich's egg or feathers 'but never anything which could warrant the supposition that manufacturing skills and industry were known among them'.<sup>74</sup> Kenrick pointed out that even at this period in history the black races of the interior of Africa were the victims of the cruelty of their neighbours who often reduced to slavery people whose features and other characteristics of race 'are precisely those which mark them to the present day'.<sup>75</sup>

For an effect so general and enduring there must be lasting causes and it was clear, he wrote, that it must be attributed to an inferiority of race in the native population of Africa. If one extended this inferiority to the African intellectual faculties, it would explain why this race has been prevented in making the same advances in art, literature and other aspects of civilisation which have been made in different ages by China, India, Egypt and Greece. Kenrick wrote that the fact of

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

inferiority here was not to be denied and that when from motives of humanity we maintained the absolute equality of the Negro race with the nations mentioned 'we do their cause an injury'.<sup>76</sup>

The native African, he pointed out, was characterised by all those outward peculiarities which the physiognomist and physiologist have identified as marks of inferior intellectual capacity. The proportion of brain was the smallest and the indications of the predominance of sensual over intellectual and moral quality the most marked. It would be a great error to speak of all the black nations as if they stood upon the same ground with regard to their intellectual faculties. Although race differs from race among them, there is still a general character and an average number of qualities belonging to each one and 'this average is lower in the African than in other races, and lowest in those which deviate from the European type'.<sup>77</sup> Kenrick noted that Prichard himself, who had quoted the Heidelberg physiologist Friedrich Tiedemann as being in favour of the opinion that in relation to the size of the brain the European had no advantage over the African, nevertheless conceded that others had different views. Those who disagreed were, for example, Cuvier, Samuel von Sömmering, Peter Camper and the controversial London surgeon and physiologist William Lawrence (1783-1867).<sup>78</sup> These men, wrote Kenrick, were 'names which may make us pause in adopting Tiedemann's decision'.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Von Sömmering and Peter Camper were early phrenologists. By 1800 they and others had established a science of comparative anatomy. Von Sömmering had dissected both blacks and Europeans, while Camper had measured the facial angles of different races. Because he refused to maintain the distinction between man and animal in his work, William Lawrence was branded a materialist and an

The idea that some entire races were intellectually inferior to the Anglo Saxon and would never catch up with the advances of the white races was closely related to the 'science' of phrenologists like von Sömmering and Camper. They studied cranial structures in order to identify and analyse psychological and intellectual characteristics. This mode of thought suggested, of course, that there were limits on the idea of the uniform progress of mankind, for in the mind of the phrenologist and the mid-Victorian racialist some men were more rational than others.<sup>80</sup>

The intellectual inferiority of the African was a major factor in the failure of the continent to become civilised, but external factors also had played their part. Kenrick pointed out that the most striking characteristic of the African continent was its isolation from the rest of the world. There were no major gulfs, only a long coastal barrier. Unlike Asia, with its networks of gulfs, inlets and navigable rivers, Africa showed a 'singular monotony of outline'.<sup>81</sup> Kenrick cited the opinions of the German geographer Carol Ritter (1779-1859), whom he described as 'the first who has treated fully and philosophically of the physical geography in connexion with the history of man', and whom, he added, laid great stress on the intermixture of sea and land by deep bays as an important cause of intercourse between nations and the promotion of civilisation.<sup>82</sup> In addition to its

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atheist. His major work, *Lectures on the Natural History of Man*, was published in 1819. See Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, pp. 26, 43.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>80</sup> De Guistino, *Conquest of Mind*, pp. 71 ff.

<sup>81</sup> Kenrick, 'Civilisation of Africa', p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.10. Carl Ritter was professor at the University of Berlin from 1820 until his death. Greatly influenced by Alexander von Humboldt, Ritter published his first geographical writings in 1804 and 1807. His most important work, however, was *Die Erkunde im Verhältniss zur Natur und zur Geschichte des*

geographical disadvantages, the climate of equatorial Africa was 'unfriendly to the development of the physical and intellectual qualities of the human species'.

<sup>83</sup> Thus intellectual inferiority, geographical position and climate were all factors which had retarded the development of the African race.

Kenrick was aware that there were two different sets of causes which could have brought about the retardation of the African and these were directly linked to one's view of the origins and development of mankind. If we believed in a single source as the origins of man we would then agree that a 'long succession of outward influences have produced the peculiarities of the African race, [and] this is a presumption that they are not necessarily permanent'. <sup>84</sup> However, he conceded that even if these peculiarities were 'original', by which he meant innate to that race because it had come into being as a separate variety of mankind, they might still be reversed by the 'endless modifications' of intermixture with other races. <sup>85</sup> Consequently, his prognosis with regard to the African condition was not entirely hopeless, for, he wrote 'I by no means assume that the Africans are a race incapable of improvement'. <sup>86</sup> On the contrary, he believed that by pointing out the causes which had retarded their civilisation, and discriminating between those which were temporary, and those permanent, he could encourage hope of the future regeneration of the race. <sup>87</sup>

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*Menschen*, published in 1817, with a revised edition in 1822. It brought together elements of geography and human history and analysed the relationship between the two.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*



The suggestion that there were these two sets of factors related to the situation of the African races was a significant point in his argument. It is clear that Kenrick believed that there were not only climatic and geographical influences affecting Africa's development, but that there were innate failings in the race also which retarded its development. Kenrick believed that Africa would develop along different lines from European civilisation. He rejected Thomas Arnold's well known opinion that the Negro race at some point in the future would be delivered from degradation and would be raised to the same level as other races. Kenrick failed to see how this was possible without some degeneration of other races, which was very unlikely. He wrote of Africa

I am content to hope that she is destined to arise  
at length and join in the march of improvement,  
though she may have no chance of outstripping  
those who are already so [advanced].<sup>88</sup>

Kenrick's own view, however, was that European civilisation was not necessarily the norm, to the exclusion of all other forms of development. We were, he wrote, apt to identify 'civilisation' with our own complex system and to condemn people as barbarous 'who have not steam engines and railways, newspapers or electric telegraphs'.<sup>89</sup> After all, he wrote, manufactures had attained perfection before steam, and literature existed in a perfect form before the invention of printing.

Kenrick did not believe that Africa was destined to remain as it was. He was confident that it would become more agriculturally productive, that its

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

customs and laws would improve, and that its barbarous superstitions would be changed for a purer form of religion. However, he wrote 'It is ... neither to be expected nor desired that Africa should in the progress of its improvement be strictly confirmed to the European model'.<sup>90</sup> Rather It would seem that Africa would take a path towards a form of civilisation which would be different from that of more advanced nations and consequently there is an element in his thought which favours the idea of racial determinism.

This notion in Kenrick's thought regarding the factors, innate and external, which influenced human character and development was in some respects similar to that of the Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), whose ideas Kenrick would have encountered at Glasgow College. Stewart believed that in human development the innate and active powers of men and the mechanisms of the laws of association complemented one another. He thought that both innate principles and external circumstances were responsible for the creation of character, attitudes, taste and moral sensibilities. Stewart wrote that the human will, for example, exercised its influence over the train of thoughts extensively, and the 'different degrees in which it is possessed by different individuals, constitute some of the most striking inequalities among men, in point of intellectual capacity'.<sup>91</sup>

Consequently, during his time at Glasgow College from 1807 to 1810 Kenrick came across ideas about the function of the associationist principles very different from Priestley's absolutist interpretation of them. For Priestley

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, (London, 1848), p. 157. This work was first published in 1792.

associationism suggested the mechanical function of an autonomous train of thought leading inexorably from the perceptions of sense to the coalescence of a general universal moral law. In the Scottish philosophy, by contrast, the trains of thought were controlled to a great extent by the innate qualities of the individual. Similarly, Kenrick's thought suggests an approach which recognises both innate and external causes for the nature and extent of the development of human races over time.

Kenrick's general perspective on the question of the races of men pointed towards the idea of separate origins and the tendency in his analyses was to pinpoint differences between races rather than to emphasise any common factors. His preference also was for the idea that racial characteristics remained stable over time. The fact that he also recognised an innate element in races revealed a tendency towards the concept of racial determinism. In his view, it would appear that the nature and degree of development of each racial type were determined not only from without, but also from within, and this reflected the idea that races had their inherited characteristics.

Kenrick was not a polygenist in the fullest sense. He saw all humanity as fundamentally belonging to the same species and saw no reason why all could not interbreed successfully. This idea of a single species concurred with a belief that 'with all these causes of variety, there is a remarkable amount of correspondence arising from the uniformity of human nature'.<sup>92</sup> This would suggest that in his thoughts on the diversity of mankind he was a transitional

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<sup>92</sup> John Kenrick, 'New Year's Day in Ancient Rome', in *A Selection of Papers on Subjects of Archaeology and History, communicated to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society* (London, 1864), p. 221.

figure. However the biblical chronology precluded any reliance on the climate theory to explain the diversities of humankind and consequently it seemed to him far more likely that the major races had come into being in separate locations on earth. In the absence of interbreeding, races remained stable in their characteristics. Indeed he indicates that the only way in which the 'permanent' failings of Africans may be removed is through intermixtures with other races. This emphasises his views that at least in part, the retardation of the African races is due to innate factors, which in turn reveals a tendency in Kenrick to agree with a form of racial determinism.

Consequently, Kenrick's thought supported a quasi-polygenetic perspective on the varieties of humanity which undermined ideas about the uniformity of the progress of the human race. His ideas on the subject had much greater affinity with racial theories of the later nineteenth century. In this context one particular factor is significant, and that is the idea that without any intermixtures with other races, the characteristics of a race remain stable. Kenrick's treatment of this theme was an optimistic one, for he believed that it would be interbreeding with other races which would alter favourably the 'permanent' factors which held back the African race in its advance towards civilisation. Conversely, the view taken by Joseph-Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816-1882), who wrote of races as 'clear-cut varieties of which their main quality is undoubtedly their permanence, a permanence that can only be lost by a crossing of blood',<sup>93</sup> was rather one of great pessimism. He believed that the white races were superior and that they

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<sup>93</sup> Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, quoted from 'The Separation of Races', in *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853-1855), section 10 (no page given), in Michael Biddiss (ed), *Gobineau, Selected Political Writings* (London, 1971), p. 107.

would flourish only as long as they remained free of intermixture with the inferior black and yellow races, for interbreeding with these would result in corruption and immorality. Despite their different perspectives on this question, one optimistic, the other not so, Kenrick and Gobineau shared the common belief that, left to themselves, the characteristics of races would remain stable and unchanged. Thus although Kenrick's ideas on race hovered between polygenism and its opposite there were nevertheless characteristics of his racial thought which could be firmly connected to later racial theories.

Kenrick's biological assessment of race came about because he knew that history had no part to play in the discovery of the truth about the origins of mankind. History, however, in the role given to it by Unitarian biblical criticism, had a crucial part to play in Kenrick's evaluation of the relationship between scripture and science. The second part of this chapter will explore this idea and its implications, which led to fundamental changes in Kenrick's ideas about the nature of religious belief and the kind of philosophy which accommodated this new position.

During the earlier decades of the nineteenth century the study of geology had struggled to gain a foothold as a credible branch of scientific discovery. The biggest barrier to the establishment and expansion of the geological sciences was the orthodox religious idea of the length of past time. The great geologist Charles Lyell believed that the present state of man's world had been brought about by uniform, cyclical and natural change over a long period.<sup>94</sup> The crucial

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<sup>94</sup> Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Genesis and Geology, A Study in the Relations of Scientific Thought, Natural Theology and Social Opinion in Great Britain, 1790-1850* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), pp. 126-127.

question was how that had been accomplished in the very brief six thousand years allocated by the Hebrew chronology. Clearly also, if men of religion accepted the truth of the single pair narrative in Genesis, then the validity of Old Testament chronology was weakened, and vice versa. Consequently it became very difficult for those who believed in the inspired truth of ancient scripture to explain away the diversity of mankind on a religious dimension alone. In short, it was becoming well-nigh impossible to encompass within one rational dimension the scriptural account and the conclusions of science in general, and those of geology in particular.

There was no doubt about the gravity of the geological challenge, and in Kenrick's opinion it seriously threatened 'The peace established between theology and science'.<sup>95</sup> The first eleven chapters of Genesis, he wrote, posed difficult questions which had been forced into the open since the interpretation of scripture was freed from the authority of the church and since science and history had been independently cultivated as disciplines. Previously, Kenrick pointed out, controversies had been confined to conflicting opinions about the interpretation of scripture itself, and due to the often ambiguous phraseology of scripture it was never difficult for those holding opposite opinions to find authority for them in the same volume.<sup>96</sup> A skilful metaphysician, he wrote, might undertake to reconcile free will with predestination, but to reconcile the Copernican system of the

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<sup>95</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. ix.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. vii, viii.

universe with a 'phraseology founded on the belief of the revolution of the heavenly bodies around the earth was clearly impossible'.<sup>97</sup>

It became evident also that the findings of geology could no longer be represented as 'crude speculation'. Geology had demonstrated that the world had not been brought into the state in which man had been placed upon it by a single and instantaneous act of creative power; rather it had shown that 'ages of ages had elapsed from the commencement to the close of this process'.<sup>98</sup> The difficulties presented by the ancient scriptures with regard to the creation, the deluge and its subsequent chronology were not for Kenrick simply a problem for geology alone but one for history also. Clearly, on historical grounds there were formidable objections to the Hebrew chronology, for it was incredible that 'a little more than four hundred years after the world was dispeopled by the Flood, Abraham should have found a Pharaoh reigning over the monarchy of Egypt'.<sup>99</sup>

While the geologists tried to work out a way of vindicating themselves from charges of contradicting the authority of the ancient scriptures, problems, of course, arose with other branches of knowledge. The physiologist found it hard to maintain the unity of the human species and its origin from a single pair along with the chronology of the deluge which 'allows only a few centuries for the development of the most marked and permanent varieties'.<sup>100</sup> The ethnographer too was 'equally perplexed by the multitude of languages, or different roots,

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. x.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

structure and analogies...in all quarters of the globe'.<sup>101</sup> History demanded, for the 'multiplication and diffusion of mankind, the progress of the arts and sciences, and the consolidation of empires' a period far longer than the four or five centuries into which these 'vast and gradual changes have been crowded'.<sup>102</sup> Kenrick added that such a state of things was embarrassing to science, and 'full of danger to the interests of religion', and it was time that the difficulty was fully acknowledged and met.<sup>103</sup>

There were many different ways of confronting the problems arising from Genesis, geology, physiology and ethnology in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. All of them attempted to harmonise the scriptural narratives about creation with the advances in science of the time. The ideas of orthodoxy were expressed in a work entitled *Scripture and Science not at Variance*, by John H. Pratt, Archdeacon of Calcutta.<sup>104</sup> Pratt's view was that it was 'impossible that Scripture, proceeding as it does from Divine Inspiration...can, when rightly interpreted, be at variance with the works of the Divine Hand'.<sup>105</sup> Because this record of nature and the Word of God came from the same infallible author they could not therefore disagree with one another. Rather, if these two divine records were forced into 'unnatural conflict' it was man's fault, because he was the fallible interpreter.<sup>106</sup> A closer examination of scripture would most likely restore harmony and indeed the discoveries of science might very well throw a new light

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>104</sup> John H. Pratt, *Scripture and Science not at Variance; with Remarks on The Historical Character, Plenary Inspiration, and Surpassing Importance, of the Earlier Chapters of Genesis* (London, 1858).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 5.



on scripture, which would then be relieved of its false interpretations. Finally, there was always the possibility that science itself would be proved wrong. Under the guidance of wiser men this would be corrected and again harmony would be possible.<sup>107</sup>

The Nonconformist divine John Pye Smith (1774-1851), who was divinity tutor at the Dissenting college at Homerton, based his attempts at the harmonisation of scripture and science on the idea that Genesis ought to be regarded as revelation given by God to the first creatures in a manner which was intelligible to them. Consequently the scriptures should be seen by us as analogous to what God's word really meant in modern terms. Pye Smith asserted that we were therefore on safe ground and fully warranted by divine authority to '*translate* the language of the Old Testament upon physical subjects, into such modern expressions as shall be *agreeable to the reality* of the thing spoken of'.<sup>108</sup> For Pye Smith the Mosaic narrative was true and the alleged discrepancies between the Holy Scriptures and the discoveries of scientific investigation were 'not in reality, but in semblance only'.<sup>109</sup> The narrative had been 'suited to the men of primeval times', yet when it was understood by the conversion of what was figurative and idiomatical into plain language, '*it is a faithful description* of the facts that did occur, and the method and order of their occurrence'.<sup>110</sup> This

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>108</sup> John Pye Smith, *On the Relation Between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* (London, 1839), p. 277. The italics are Pye Smith's.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. The italics are Pye Smith's.

meant that ‘the most accurate science confirm[ed] the declarations of scripture, if only we take care to *understand them rightly*’.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly, the objective of the American geologist Edward Hitchcock (1793-1864), president of Amherst College and professor of natural theology and geology there, was the reconciliation of science and scripture. His method was to present evidence to show that the earth was indeed of great antiquity, but argued that this in no way challenged the authority of the narrative in Genesis. The fact that according to interpretation of Scripture there had been a long period between the creation of matter and the creation of light, allowed time for the earth to develop the way it had, and ‘gives the widest scope to the geologist’, with every chance to indulge his ‘largest speculations concerning the age of the world’.<sup>112</sup> All the changes of mineral constitution and organic life over long ages which had been revealed by the strata of rocks had been passed over in silence by the sacred writers because such things had been irrelevant to the subject of revelation. They were now, however, full of interest to the man of science ‘who should afterwards take pleasure in exploring the works of God’.<sup>113</sup>

Like Pye Smith, the scholar William Whewell (1794-1866), who became professor of moral philosophy at Cambridge, in 1838 and Master of Trinity College in 1841, advocated the re-interpretation of parts of scripture in order to accommodate the new discoveries. The sacred narrative, he wrote, spoke of natural objects and events very different from anything which now took place. When applied to an initial state, these words and phrases ‘cannot help being to

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 292-293.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 63, 62.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-63.

us obscure and mysterious, perhaps ambiguous and seemingly contradictory'.<sup>114</sup> It was inevitable, he wrote, that modifications of the current interpretation of the words of Scripture would come about as a consequence of the 'progressive character of Natural Science'. Science taught us to describe known facts in new language, but the language of scripture was 'always the same'. It had been necessarily adapted to the common state of man's intellectual development, 'in which he is supposed not to be possessed of science'.<sup>115</sup> However, when the language of Scripture, 'invested with its new meaning', had become familiar to man, it will be found that 'the ideas which it calls up are quite as reconcilable as the former ones were with the most entire acceptance of the providential dispensation'.<sup>116</sup>

John Kenrick believed that all these attempts by such writers to harmonise the Mosaic narrative with the discoveries of modern science were futile and misguided. He had never wavered from the perspectives of the Unitarian historical criticism he learned in his youth. Now, decades later, it once again became a powerful argument, this time against the corruption of scripture by attempts to accommodate it with science. Instead of trying to twist the meaning of scripture to support false doctrine, orthodox writers were now attempting to make it harmonise with the science of the day.

Kenrick's reaction to Whewell's ideas was one almost of disbelief.

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<sup>114</sup> William Whewell, *Indications of the Creator, Extracts Bearing Upon Theology from the History and the Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (London, 1845), p. 128.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

He wrote that Whewell had spoken repeatedly of ‘the necessity of bringing forward new *interpretations* of Scripture, to meet the discoveries of science’.<sup>117</sup> He, Whewell, talked of the language of Scripture being invested with a new meaning. It is difficult, wrote Kenrick, to understand this otherwise than as sanctioning the principle that the commentator is to bend the meaning of scripture into conformity with the discoveries of science. This would be utterly inconsistent with reverence for Scripture and ‘calculated to bring both it and its interpreters into suspicion and contempt; and we must suppose the Author to have meant, that our ideas of the *authority* of certain portions of Scripture ‘are to be modified, when we find their obvious meaning to be at variance with scientific truths’.<sup>118</sup>

At first geologists had been reproached for presuming to place their own crude speculations in opposition to the word of God, but at length the discrepancies of time became ‘too certain to be any longer denied’.<sup>119</sup> The best course of action, it appeared, was to ‘devise some new rendering or exposition of the Bible narrative’, and indeed this method was adopted.<sup>120</sup>

‘We impute no dishonesty of purpose to the learned and pious men who have engaged in this attempt’, Kenrick wrote, and on the part of Whewell, Kenrick decided that he himself ‘would rather suppose some confusion of ideas or of

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<sup>117</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. xvi.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>119</sup> John Kenrick, ‘Religion and Geology’, Review Article of *The Religion of Geology and its Connected Sciences*, By Edward Hitchcock, President of Amherst College, and Professor of Natural Theology and Geology. Boston, 1851. *PR*, vol. 7, 1851, p. 462.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

phraseology, than a deliberate design to pervert scripture from its obvious meaning'.<sup>121</sup>

In a similar vein, despite the fact that Kenrick seemed to have agreed with the hypothesis on the origins of man of the Swiss naturalist and geologist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), Kenrick had some harsh words for him. This 'distinguished philosopher', Kenrick wrote, had struck at the heart of orthodoxy with an opinion shared by many physiologists, that many different varieties of man had been placed in separate parts of the world by the Creator. This hypothesis had been sure to 'excite boundless clamour', but Agassiz tried to avoid controversy by 'alleging that his views were not at variance with the Mosaic history'<sup>122</sup> and by 'attempting to make the author of Genesis bear witness to an original plurality of races'.<sup>123</sup> The injury of such attempts, wrote Kenrick, accrued to religion more than to science.<sup>124</sup> No philosopher, he wrote, would close his eyes to scientific evidence, but the flawed exegesis by which he attempted to make it tally with scripture exposed him to the suspicion of having no sound rule of interpretation. Furthermore, it made the Bible seem obscure and uncertain instead of 'simple, direct and honest in its historical style'.<sup>125</sup>

In this controversy about how to relate Genesis and the new sciences, Kenrick had come full circle. His lifelong role as a Socinian historical biblical critic demanded that 'the credibility of every historical writing must stand on its own

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., pp. 462-463.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>123</sup> Kenrick, 'Bunsen's Philosophy of History', p. 530.

<sup>124</sup> Kenrick, 'Religion and Geology', p. 466.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

ground'.<sup>126</sup> For him, nothing had changed and the Bible had to be interpreted like any other work, with careful consideration being given to the age and context in which the testaments were written and also to the perspectives of those who wrote them. There ought to be no attempt to twist or corrupt the scriptures to comply with false doctrine, or indeed to harmonise them with 'modern' ideas which were entirely out of context.

The history of the Hebrew people was a national history and the various portions of it had been founded upon documentary evidence, poetical sources, tradition and even to the period before written records began. We could not, he insisted, have the same evidence 'of the events of the reigns of David and Solomon, and those of the period comprehended in the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis'.<sup>127</sup> Nor could we be surprised, he added, if, without documents respecting primæval times, 'a narrative should have formed itself, reflecting the opinions, partly true and partly erroneous, of the people among whom it had its birth'.<sup>128</sup>

The American Edward Hitchcock, for example, had unfortunately 'identified Religion with the cosmogonic and historical opinions of the Jewish people in the remote age in which the book of Genesis was compiled or written'.<sup>129</sup> He then took upon himself the impracticable task of reconciling them with modern science. This was erroneous. The solution to the problem could not be found, Kenrick claimed, in the oft-repeated maxim that religion and science,

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<sup>126</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. xviii.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>129</sup> Kenrick, 'Religion and Geology', p. 471.

being both true, cannot therefore be inconsistent with one another, for those who argue this 'do not use the same words in the same sense'.<sup>130</sup> Kenrick's contention was that

The objector, when he charges science with undermining Religion, means that it impairs, by contradicting, the authority of the writings on which revealed religion is founded; while the apologist, if he has any definite meaning, understands by religion, those great and indestructible sentiments of the human mind, which preceded, and may survive, all written records and all historical evidence.<sup>131</sup>

Thus those who insisted that there was a conflict between religion and science made the mistake of assuming that the two were to be judged on the same fundamental basis. This was not so, because they could not be compared on equal terms. Science was founded upon the reason applied to nature and the physical world, but religion was part of human experience and we should therefore take account of the human capacity for imagination and religious feeling.

Our belief, Kenrick maintained, would be strengthened by the fact that there was a 'middle ground' between these two 'firm and wide enough to build an ample and enduring structure of religious faith'.<sup>132</sup> Neither 'our religious feelings nor our religious belief', he held, were necessarily affected by a discriminating

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<sup>130</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. xiii.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

criticism of the Jewish records.<sup>133</sup> Creation was still an example of omnipotence, and in the limitation of it to six days we 'trace the influence of the Jewish institution of the sabbath'.<sup>134</sup> The narrative of the creation of woman we should regard rather as a 'simple and natural expression of the relation and mutual feeling of the sexes', than as a historical fact.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore 'conscience and observation, no less than Scripture, teach us the weakness and defects of our moral nature'.<sup>136</sup> The essence of religious and moral feeling was not then something which required the literal reading of scripture or evidence of science to prove its worth.

Kenrick's idea that religion and science had to be considered separately appeared in the 1840s, the decade during which he wrote *Primæval History*. In the light of the new discoveries of the mid nineteenth century his ideas on the parting of the ways of religion and science were becoming more prevalent within many areas of intelligent society, including Unitarianism, and Kenrick commented, 'I know that this is the state of many minds'.<sup>137</sup> This view of religion and science showed that Kenrick had travelled a long intellectual journey since his scholarly beginnings under the towering influence of Joseph Priestley. As R.K. Webb points out, the Priestleyan system had been hugely influential and had shared in the most advanced thought of the age in psychology, political theory, science and theology.<sup>138</sup> Priestley's radical Enlightenment mind had

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. xx.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. xxi.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. xxii.

<sup>138</sup> R.K. Webb, 'John Hamilton Thom, Intellect and Conscience in Liverpool', in P.T. Phillips (ed.), *The View From the Pulpit: Victorian Ministers and Society* (Toronto, 1978), p. 214.



created a vast, rational synthesis of man, nature, natural philosophy and God in which reason and faith were fully integrated. This was a concept of reality in which man was completely bound within the processes of nature and subject to its eternal and universal laws.

The term 'integration', however, does not really encompass satisfactorily the essence of Priestley's vision, for his ideas went beyond that. Priestley's concept of the nature of existence was centred upon the idea of the small amount of matter in the universe as being penetrable and forming ever-shifting patterns of force fields. This resulted in a form of 'spirito-materialism' which had the effect of incorporating together in a theological sense the spiritual and the material, faith and reason and the religious and the natural world, the latter being a world in which man was an intrinsic part. The result was a monist understanding of reality and spirituality as one. Priestley's view was that of an unbroken synthesis of spirit and matter within which reason, knowledge and faith found their meaning. The 'otherness' of a separate dimension, which would allow for the idea of the pre-existence of Christ, was alien to his thought and in Priestley's mind there was no room for the dualism which would permit the concept of a separate soul.<sup>139</sup>

By the 1840s John Kenrick, who had been a staunch Socinian, had accepted that there could be no harmonisation of science and religion, or, by implication, reason and faith. This implied his return to a dualism which represented a complete departure from the ideas of Priestley. His Priestleyan predecessors and early contemporaries in the Unitarian movement had relied on reason and its handmaiden, historical criticism, to validate their faith. The result

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<sup>139</sup> See chapter two, above.

of this was a dry, rational form of belief which lacked the spontaneous and 'irrational' joy of religious faith. By the mid nineteenth century, however, Kenrick and many other intellectuals had begun to realise that the concrete and verifiable discoveries of science now threatened to undermine religious belief.

Reason, that fundamental principle of Enlightenment thought, had turned upon religion, the very thing it had been required previously to support. The time had come therefore to take the dualist route, to release faith from the bonds of reason and re-locate it in an unquantifiable dimension of feeling, emotion, spirituality, imagination and joy, where it would be securely isolated from the incursions of pure rationality. Thus, on the issue of reason and faith, Kenrick now took a contrasting position on the essence of reality, one which differed radically from Priestley, his Enlightenment mentor. In Kenrick, philosophical dualism had reappeared, this time in a form which separated the realm of science and the natural world from that of man, and which broke down Priestley's eighteenth-century synthesis.

The altered relationship between religion and science was a persistent aspect of Kenrick's thought from the 1840s, when he wrote his *Essay on Primæval History*, and there are several reasons why he began to see them as separate. Clearly the immediate catalysts for his statements on the subject had been the concerted attempts in that decade by Hitchcock, Whewell and others to effect a reconciliation between religion and science by means of the realignment and reinterpretation of scripture. Consequently, the frame of mind which Kenrick had inherited from Unitarian historical criticism, which defended the integrity of

scripture, has to be considered an important factor in his rejection of attempts by his contemporaries to 'bend' scripture into an accommodation with mid nineteenth-century sciences, particularly geology.

In a wider sense Kenrick, like many thinking religious men, was aware that the discoveries of the ethnological and geological sciences were problems which had to be confronted by Christian intellectuals such as himself. He wrote that although those of his time admired the wisdom and humanity of the Mosaic institutions and the beauty and purity of the devotional writings of scripture, they could neither close their eyes to the discoveries of science and history, nor satisfy their understanding with 'the expedients which have been devised for reconciling them with the language of the Hebrew records'.<sup>140</sup>

His understanding of literary criticism in a Romantic sense was another factor in the emergence of the idea. Kenrick expressed the view that religion, which pertained to man's own mental concept of faith and the idea of God, and science, which dealt with the processes of the natural world, had to be considered separately. He had taken an analogous viewpoint in his Romantic approach to literary criticism, in which he argued that the creative productions of the human mind could not be classified by the rigid laws and uniform laws of the natural world.<sup>141</sup> In the Romantic idea it seemed that the poet could appreciate the beauty of the natural world and wax lyrical about it and the emotions which it inspired, but he himself was not *part* of nature. Neither was man bound, as Priestley had believed, by its abstract and universal laws. The individual's new

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<sup>140</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. xxii.

<sup>141</sup> John Kenrick, 'Lectures on English Literature', in two parts, UCL, Sharpe Papers, 186/187, p. 2. See chapter six, above, notes 167 and 168.

role in the Romantic Age was to rejoice in the beauty and diversity of the natural world which brought about an emotional relationship with his own creative self.<sup>142</sup>

Human emotion could never be classified by the abstract laws of natural philosophy, and accordingly the feeling which inspired religious faith could never be rationalised by the discoveries of science. Kenrick's approach to literature tended to suggest that because there could be no reconciliation between the uniformity of nature and the creative genius of man, neither could there be any accommodation between the laws of science and religious belief.

His appreciation over the decades of a form of historical understanding which concentrated upon the realities of human experience rather than philosophical systems and abstractions had drawn him closer to an idea of the innate qualities of man. His studies of human origins, of language and its interaction with thought had given force to a desire to understand the human impulse in history and the development of religious faith. Presented then with an option to regard religion as something simultaneously essentially human and spiritual which was somehow beyond the dry, classificatory systems of Enlightenment reason, Kenrick was almost certain to grasp it.

There was another important aspect of Kenrick's thought, however, which clearly must have had some bearing on his separation of religion and science by the middle of the nineteenth century, and that was his Unitarian belief in miracles. Owing to the findings of the science of the mid- nineteenth century and to the growth of knowledge at this time, many had seriously questioned the possibility of the existence of miracles. Unitarians, however, had always consistently

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<sup>142</sup> John Halsted, *Romanticism* (London, 1969), pp. 12-13.

maintained the truth of miracles as proof of God's revelation, and had never altered their beliefs on this point. Indeed one of their strongest criticisms of German critics in the period had been the fact that many of them were 'anti-supernaturalists' who denied the possibility of the miraculous events narrated in the Bible.<sup>143</sup> Kenrick's faith in miracles never wavered. In 1821, in his article on the German critic J.S. Semler, he wrote that he did not doubt that German theologians would 'return from this extreme of scepticism', for he himself believed that the miraculous parts of the New Testament history were established by the same rules of evidence as the rest, and that 'no separation can be made of them'.<sup>144</sup> Forty three years later, in *Biblical Essays*, he repeated the same sentiments when he declared that he believed there were facts in the gospel history 'which do not admit of explanation without recourse to miracle'.<sup>145</sup>

If then, confronted by the scientific knowledge which seriously challenged the existence of miracles, Kenrick as a Unitarian had to deny their very existence, he would then have been forced to relinquish what had always been regarded in the tradition of his belief as a fundamental support for the argument in favour of revealed religion. All other aspects of the 'corrupted' Christianity, among them the atonement, eternal punishment and the divinity of Christ, had been rationalised by Unitarians in their theological and historical arguments. A faith in the existence of miracles, therefore, was one of the last remaining foundation stones in the edifice of Unitarian Christian belief and without it the entire structure would collapse. This aspect of Unitarian belief was something

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<sup>143</sup> See chapter four, above.

<sup>144</sup> John Kenrick, 'Biographical Sketch of J.S. Semler', *MR*, vol. 16, February 1821, p. 140.

<sup>145</sup> John Kenrick, 'The True Nature of the Gift of Tongues' in *Biblical Essays* (London, 1864), p. 106.

which had always appeared to their critics to be a glaring inconsistency in their otherwise ultra-rational approach to religion.

In 1838 Baden Powell (1796-1860), who was Savilian Professor of Geometry at Oxford from 1827, had made the point that in order to believe that an event was a miracle, one had to acknowledge the existence of a being with the power of suspending the laws of nature and that for anyone 'versed in physical inquiries, would be the most difficult point of all'.<sup>146</sup> This, then, was very possibly another reason why Kenrick pursued the dualist option on the mid-nineteenth-century question of science and religion. The tension between a belief in miracles and a new confidence in the discoveries of science resulted in a decision to consign, as Baden Powell eventually did, the unverifiable and 'irrational' elements of religious faith to a separate dimension of human experience.

Kenrick's perspectives on science and faith paralleled those of Baden Powell who was against 'explanatory contortions' which tried to harmonise the irrationality of miracles with the stability of the natural order.<sup>147</sup> Just as Kenrick had argued that there was a 'middle ground' between reason and faith, with regard to the question of miracles, Powell suggested a compromise on the grounds of a 'primary distinction in nature and function between *reason* and *faith*, - intellect and religious sense – and the admission that what is legitimate object

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<sup>146</sup> Baden Powell, *The Connexion of Natural and Divine Truth, or, the study of the inductive philosophy considered as subservient to theology* (Oxford, 1838), pp.162-164, quoted by Pietro Corsi, *Science and Religion : Baden Powell and the Anglican Debate, 1800-1860* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 192.

<sup>147</sup> Corsi, *Science and Religion*, p. 214.

of the one, may not even be recognisable by the other'.<sup>148</sup> Pietro Corsi points out similarities between Powell's approach to the problem of miracles and that of the German neo-Hegelian theologian Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) who believed that although miracles were absurd in relation to reason they were nevertheless both objects of faith and its direct creations.<sup>149</sup> Powell differed, however, from Feuerbach in that he did not think that miracles were purely subjective creations but rather that the faith of the believer gave them concrete existence.<sup>150</sup>

In 1862, in *Essays and Reviews*, Powell made his views on the subject of the separation of the natural world from the religious one clear once again when he wrote that men must recognise both the claims of science to decide on points properly belonging to the world of *matter*, and the 'independence of such considerations which characterises the disclosure of *spiritual* truth'.<sup>151</sup> Like Kenrick, Powell believed that the more knowledge advanced the more it would be recognised that Christianity must be viewed apart from a connection with physical things. Reason and science could never provide evidence of God working miracles. The assurance that this was true was only to be found in each individual inquirer's own mind.<sup>152</sup> Powell was at the centre of the controversy which raged on this subject during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It was a debate which affected thinking Christians, and Kenrick could not have

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<sup>148</sup> Baden Powell, *The Order of Nature Considered in Reference to the Claims of Revelation* (London, 1859), p. 429, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>149</sup> Corsi, *Science and Religion*, p. 214.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Baden Powell, 'On the Study of the Evidences of Christianity', in *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1862), p. 152.

<sup>152</sup> Ieuan Ellis, *Seven Against Christ: a Study of 'Essays and Reviews'* (Leiden, 1980), pp. 63-64.

been unaware of the fundamental importance of the issues which confronted his Unitarianism.

The dualism which had developed in Kenrick's thought with regard to the human and natural worlds may also have owed something to the influence of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kenrick would most certainly have read Kant, but should evidence of this be required it may be found in his shorthand notes on German Literature in which he mentions Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* [*Critique of Pure Reason*] published in 1781.<sup>153</sup> Kant's critique had distinguished between the *phenomena* of human knowledge of the empirical world and the *noumena* of the 'things in themselves', which were 'thinkable', but not 'knowable'. This became known as the doctrine of transcendental idealism, which opened up a dimension in which reason was no longer the criterion by which all human experience was linked.

The post-Kantian decades in England resulted in the concepts of idealist thinkers such as Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) and Henry Mansel (1820-1871), who wrote of religious thought that, 'in thus believing, we desert the evidence of Reason, to rest on that of Faith'.<sup>154</sup> At this time many dualist theories were applied to different aspects of philosophy, theology and human experience. In the late eighteenth century Priestley's monist view had been that God, man and nature were part of one great chain of being, and that man, being part of nature,

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<sup>153</sup> John Kenrick, 'Notes on German Literature', Kenrick Papers, DWL, 24.107.3, Notebook 8, page 37. Writers of Rich's shorthand always wrote out fully proper names and the titles of works in order to avoid misunderstanding. See the Appendix.

<sup>154</sup> Henry Mansel, *The Limits of Religious Truth Examined* (1859), pp.290-296 (no exact page given), quoted by Bernard Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1966), pp.295-296.



was subject to its operations through the mechanisms of empiricism and associationism. At the core of this new dualism, however, was the separation between man and nature, and a consciousness of the gulf between the material world and that of the spiritual and the human soul. It was in some respects very akin to that kind of dualism in defence of which Richard Price had argued so forcibly.

The focus, then, in the mid-nineteenth century and later was often upon the nature of religious belief which many held did not necessarily comply with reason, and upon the misguided attempts of those who attempted to rationalise faith by scientific means. The neo-Kantian thinker Wilhelm Windelband argued that there had to be another dimension, a spiritual one of mystery, without which 'there is no religion', and science was 'ill-advised' to attempt to construct a religion out of its knowledge.<sup>155</sup> When religion attempted to convert itself into a demonstrable doctrine it became exposed to a clash with rational thought and lost 'the mystery which is of its very essence'. Christianity without mysteries, he added, 'was an unhappy idea of the eighteenth century'.<sup>156</sup>

Having accepted that religious belief was no longer a hostage to reason, by the 1840s Kenrick asserted his belief in a more spiritual faith relating to matters of the heart and soul rather than the physical or material world. He now wrote of feeling 'the sublimity and purity of the devotional, moral and prophetic writings of Scripture'<sup>157</sup> and also of 'a perpetual spring of feeling in the human

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<sup>155</sup> Wilhelm Windelband, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (London, 1921), pp. 335-336.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>157</sup> Kenrick, *Primæval History*, p. xxii.

heart'.<sup>158</sup> Although these were only a few scattered phrases, in their emphasis on religious feeling they closely resembled elements of the thought of the Unitarian theologian James Martineau (1805-1900).

When he first published his influential work *The Rationale of Religious Enquiry* in 1836, Martineau hinted at a less rationalistic form of religion, and one which recognised a more spiritual and Romantic idea of religious belief. In the *Rationale*, Martineau, like Kenrick, wrote of 'that truly sublime state of mind, faith – absolute faith – in truth: and the great problem will be solved, how to combine the freest intellect with the loftiest devotion; - and while inquiring always, to love and worship still'.<sup>159</sup> Martineau emphasised that the inquiries of the critic should not change in any way the feelings for his faith, for the Christian faith never goes against reason – although it may often appear to go against what reason is able to prove.<sup>160</sup>

The evolution of Martineau's religious thought had brought about a transformation in the nature of the Unitarian creed. Influenced by Coleridge,<sup>161</sup> Kant,<sup>162</sup> and the American Unitarian Divine William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), Martineau, along with others in the Unitarian movement, rejected the determinism of Priestley's doctrine of necessity in favour of a sense of individuality, and also undermined the arid rationalism of the creed with an

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<sup>158</sup> John Kenrick, *The Value of the Holy Scriptures and the Right Mode of Using Them, Four Discourses* (London, 1853), p. 45.

<sup>159</sup> James Martineau, *The Rationale of Religious Enquiry* (London, 1845), p. 73.

<sup>160</sup> Ralph Waller, 'James Martineau: The Development of his Religious Thought', in Barbara Smith (ed.), *Truth, Liberty and Religion. Essays Celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College* (Oxford, 1986), p. 239.

<sup>161</sup> Ralph Waller, 'James Martineau: His Emergence as a Theologian. His Christology, and His Doctrine of the Church, With Some Unpublished Papers', Unpublished PhD Thesis, King's College, University of London, September, 1986, p. 68.

<sup>162</sup> Waller, 'James Martineau: Development of his Religious Thought', p. 240.

emphasis on a more spiritual faith. He criticised the selfishness of Utilitarianism and adopted the Kantian rather than the Benthamite approach to ethics, believing that it was the motive rather than the result which reflected the moral characteristics of the action.<sup>163</sup>

Martineau, John James Tayler (1797-1869), Charles Wicksteed (1810-1885) and the Ulster-born minister John Hamilton Thom (1808-1894), were all prominent in a movement which led Unitarianism away from Priestleyanism towards a new kind of religious belief. It was one which incorporated the feelings of the soul, relied on innate feelings rather than external evidences and emotion rather than logic or reason. It was also a form of religious devotion which was inspired by faith rather than science. R.K. Webb's analysis of this spiritual movement in Unitarianism was that over a period of thirty years from the last two decades of the eighteenth century it moved the creed away from Priestley's rationalism to Martineau's sense of feeling and emotion.<sup>164</sup> Unitarianism under Priestley's influence had been a movement intent upon theorising and attacking Trinitarian beliefs, whereas under the leadership of people like Martineau and Thom it became religion for its own sake. Thom's maxim was 'not to philosophize about Religion – not to determine the theory of Religion, but to make you religious'.<sup>165</sup> On the question of external evidences, J.J. Tayler wrote to Thom in 1859 that he did not believe evidences ever really proved anything 'till the inner man is previously touched and already won by a deep feeling of spiritual want.' He added that while any Unitarian of the old [Priestleyan] school would regard

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>164</sup> Webb, 'John Hamilton Thom,' pp. 211-243, p. 225.

<sup>165</sup> J.H. Thom, *The Preacher and the Church* (London, 1857), pp. 26-27, quoted in *ibid*, p. 237.

such a statement as 'mystical and almost incomprehensible', it flashed into his own mind 'with all the conclusiveness of the clearest light'.<sup>166</sup> Thom's own feeling was that 'our path to God lies not through the reasoning powers ....the Soul conceiveth Him...through the sentiment of a divine Faith, and not the discovering force of an all-sufficient argument'.<sup>167</sup>

Like Kenrick, Tayler and Thom both emphasised the distinction between argumentation and reason on the one hand and sentiment and faith on the other. In this particular context, the separation of science and religion was consistent with the drift away from the rational approach of Priestley towards the Romantic sensibility of Martineau. Within the Unitarian intellectual milieu in this later period the parting of the ways of reason and faith had particular significance due to the recent history of the creed. Because Priestley's system was unique in its mechanism and ultra-rationalism and Martineau's so spiritual, emotional and Romantic, the transition between the two over thirty years was perceived as being a dramatic one. Due to the fact that Priestley had employed psychology and natural philosophy to form his synthesis of man, nature and theology, the question of the scientific as opposed to the inner spiritual impulse of man was particularly relevant to these later Unitarians and to Kenrick himself.

From the 1840s onwards Kenrick never relinquished the new dualist position that science and religion should be regarded as separate. In a letter in 1870 to Charles Beard, editor of the *Theological Review*, to which Kenrick had

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<sup>166</sup> J.J. Tayler to J.H. Thom, September 6, 1859, in J.H. Thom, *Letters embracing His Life, of John James Tayler* (London, 1872), pp. 142-143, in *ibid*, p. 228.

<sup>167</sup> J. H. Thom, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians* (London, 1851), pp. 180-181, quoted by Webb, 'John Hamilton Thom', p. 228.

contributed a number of articles, Kenrick made clear his thoughts on the subject. He wrote that he wished Beard success in his endeavours to reconcile science and theology.<sup>168</sup> He was not, he added, however, hopeful of an immediate result, for although there had been a time when science and theology had lived in harmony and cooperation, that had changed. Kenrick wrote to Beard that to establish the 'wisdom of God in the creation' was deemed by Boyle, Newton, Locke, Hartley, Priestley and Cuvier the highest result of their scientific enquiries. They thought that by pointing out the marks of design, adaptation and provision in nature which were 'all directed to a wise and benevolent end, they were powerfully aiding the cause of religion'.<sup>169</sup> We ought to remember, he urged, that it was not the men of science but the theologians, under the influence of metaphysics, who abandoned the argument from design which had carried conviction to so many generations of men. 'Will men of science', Kenrick asked, 'accept the substitute which is offered them'?<sup>170</sup>

Kenrick was of the opinion that the scientists would object to the vague use of consciousness,<sup>171</sup> which had been made the substitute for reason in regard to morals and religion. Men of science also might plausibly allege that a man cannot dispute his own consciousness of what he thinks, feels and believes, but that this cannot extend beyond himself and can be no evidence that his subjective belief has a corresponding objective reality. He reflected, 'Such is my

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<sup>168</sup> John Kenrick to Charles Beard, 26 October 1870, Liverpool University Archives, Beard Correspondence, in the Benefactors Members of Council Deposited Records, D 103/11.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> This is Kenrick's own emphasis.

old-fashioned view of the matter'.<sup>172</sup> Finally he asserted that scientific men would require scientific evidence before they yielded their assent 'although the question lies beyond the limits of physical science'.<sup>173</sup> In his letter Kenrick made his comments on the fundamental change in the approach to the relationship between religion and science in a calm and measured way. By this time he was eighty two years old and one may almost detect a sense of nostalgia with regard to those older, Priestleyan ideas which had passed into history. Alongside that, however, there was the recognition of a still-sharp mind that in a changing world there was now an irreconcilable gulf between reason and faith.

Although it has not until now been adequately recognised, John Kenrick was part of Unitarianism's transition. Kenrick was a historian, while Martineau was a theologian and philosopher, and therefore they came to certain points in their development by very different routes. Kenrick's appreciation of the individual and the unique in the historical sense was a persistent characteristic of his intellectual development from an early age. In his literary critique he had recognised the value of spontaneous human creativity in poetry and in his historical view of the ancient world the imagination of man had moulded the myths of individual societies. It would have been natural, therefore, to appreciate a creative, spiritual, innate and individual response to religious faith. Furthermore, his Unitarian position with regard to the corruption of scripture and to the question of miracles had helped to guide him towards a form of religious belief similar to that of Martineau.

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<sup>172</sup> Kenrick to Beard, 26 October, 1870.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. Once again, the emphasis here is Kenrick's.

On the question of Kenrick's acceptance of a more spiritual faith as opposed to the rational one into which he had been born, James Martineau himself was not blind to the changes in John Kenrick. In a late piece of work entitled 'Saint Jerome and his Theological Correspondents', published in 1864,<sup>174</sup> Kenrick had praised Benjamin Jowett's application to the scriptures of 'the common sense principles of classical philology' which helped him to produce 'that Essay which is the *Novum Organum* of biblical interpretation'.<sup>175</sup> Kenrick was referring to Jowett's essay on biblical interpretation which had appeared in the famous *Essays and Reviews*, first published four years earlier, in 1860.

It was not surprising that Kenrick handed such praise to Jowett's efforts,<sup>176</sup> for there was much in his essay with which Kenrick would have been intensely familiar. The Anglican classicist had criticised 'efforts to pull the authority of the Scriptures in different directions'.<sup>177</sup> The interpreter, wrote Jowett, should be concerned to preserve the simple word of that book absolutely pure from the refinements or distortions of later times. The book itself remained unchanged amid the different interpretations of it, and the office of the critic was not to add yet another point of interpretation, but to recover the original sense. The greater part of his learning came from the reading of the text itself, and the reader of

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<sup>174</sup> John Kenrick, 'Saint Jerome and his Theological Correspondents', *TR*, vol. 1, March 1864, pp. 27-51.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49. In a brief note Kenrick wrote that 'We do not mean that the principles of that Essay are absolutely new....They have long been familiar to many of our readers in theory and practice. But the clearness in which they are set forth in it, joined to the station and character of the author, will make a return to the old methods impossible, on the part of any one who aspires to the reputation of a biblical scholar.' See note pp. 49-50.

<sup>176</sup> Benjamin Jowett, 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', in *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1862). The main point of the essay was that although it was crucial to interpret scripture in a true historical way, faith rose above the disputes about evidences. Jowett (1817-1893) was a classicist and Broad Churchman who became Master of Balliol College, Oxford, in 1870. When his essay appeared in 1860 he was tried but acquitted by the vice-chancellor's court. His liberal theology had a profound and lasting effect on the college. See Peter Hinchcliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 92-120.

<sup>177</sup> Jowett, 'Interpretation of Scripture', p. 400.

scripture should have no delight in the voluminous literature which had overgrown it. His object was to 'read Scripture like any other book'.<sup>178</sup> Jowett's conclusion to the essay was that although the scholar was worn out with intellectual toil and regarded with suspicion by many of his contemporaries' yet he would not be without 'a sure hope that the love of truth, which men of saintly lives often seem to slight, is, nevertheless, accepted before God.'<sup>179</sup>

In his memoir of Kenrick, Martineau highlighted Kenrick's mention and obvious appreciation of Jowett's famous essay.<sup>180</sup> Kenrick must, wrote Martineau, have felt the power of a more spiritual school of thought if he had heaped such praise upon Jowett. The Anglican's essay had the effect of clearing the spiritual aspects of scripture from all dependence on disputable 'evidences' and had seen the life of Christ as the centre of Christian teaching. Martineau added that

Without attributing to Mr. Kenrick any conscious removal from his early theological position, we yet believe that his judgement had led him to conclusions, and the currents of life floated him into a climate of feeling, congenial only with a philosophy other than he had imbibed; and that, whether or not it found a place in his understanding, it had some secret harmony with the largeness of his later sympathy and serenity of his faith.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 527.

<sup>180</sup> James Martineau, *In Memoriam, John Kenrick* (London, 1877), p. 32.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 33.



Thus in two ways John Kenrick's treatment of history had brought him to evolve sets of ideas which had more affinity with the later nineteenth century than the century in which he was born. His realisation that history could never discover the truth about the origins of man guided him towards a biological assessment on the varieties of humankind, their beginnings and their limitations, which was akin to the racial theories which emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Kenrick's second conclusion about history, based upon the Unitarian historical biblical criticism with which he had been concerned all his life, was that because it had shown that Genesis formed the traditions and beliefs of an ancient people, the ancient scriptures could therefore never be bent into an accommodation with the discoveries of modern science.

This in turn resulted in his realisation of a growing gulf between science and religion, between reason and faith, which prompted his acceptance of a more spiritual and Romantic form of belief and the dualism that it required. Like Baden Powell, he resisted attempts to harmonise scripture with science and saw them instead as falling in different dimensions of human experience. This reflected a dualism which he shared with Kant and the Idealists of the later nineteenth century.

Kenrick's thought was in many respects like that of the Unitarians James Martineau and James Hamilton Thom, whose adoption of a more spiritual faith had transformed Unitarianism. Also, by the 1860's Kenrick's opinions had revealed themselves to be sympathetic to aspects of that Broad Church theological 'revolution' which had expressed itself in *Essays and Reviews*. His

affinity with Jowett's essay was predictable, of course, for it had revealed opinions which had been familiar to Unitarian biblical critics for at least seven decades. In general terms, with regard to race, theology and philosophy, Kenrick's thought had discarded many aspects of the eighteenth century Age of Reason and had become integrated with a more Romantic intellectual milieu.

Most significant of all, however, was a re-emergence in the thought of John Kenrick of a frame of mind very different from the monism of Joseph Priestley. Kenrick had come to separate science and faith and the world of nature from the world of man. Consequently, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Kenrick's thought took account of that division between the physical and the spiritual worlds which had been the defining factor in the dualism of Richard Price. In this particularly fundamental respect, by the end of his life Kenrick had transferred his allegiance from Priestley to Price.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSION**

An important point to consider in this final analysis of the nature and depth of the intellectual transition of the Unitarian John Kenrick from an Enlightenment to a more Romantic and Idealist frame of mind is the relationship between context and the individual. Certain aspects of the context within which Kenrick's religious thought and historical biblical method was formed engaged with other influences in his scholarly life. These included German thought, English Romanticism and the new scientific discoveries of the mid nineteenth century.

On the question of context, the Socinianism of the late eighteenth century was epitomised by the thought of Joseph Priestley, the most influential religious radical of his time. In terms of general historical principles, Priestley's thought was concerned with universal values and an optimistic, linear view of progress of mankind towards perfection in the future. For Priestley, moral and cultural diversity were aberrations in the universal scheme of things and secular history itself provided lessons for mankind.

In theology, however, Priestley's desire was to prove the irrationality of many orthodox doctrines, but in particular those which supported the divinity of Christ. This belief was underpinned by every aspect of Priestley's thought : his necessitarian philosophy, moral system, natural philosophy and political theory all blended together in his monist perspective on the nature of existence.

Priestley's mind encompassed one great unbroken, linear flow of cause and effect which integrated God, man, nature, mind and body and even life and death. It differed fundamentally from the dualist perception of reality proposed by Richard Price, which meant that that the metaphysical gulf between Priestley and Price represented a clear division in late eighteenth-century radical thought.

It was this frame of mind of Priestley's, very influential amongst his contemporaries and successors, which supported the Socinian theology and its tradition of rational, historical interpretation of the scriptures. Priestley, having shown in metaphysical terms how it was that Christ was a simple human being, now wished to prove it historically, for in Priestley's view the idea that Christ had been pre-existent and divine was the greatest corruption to have distorted the Christian religion. Consequently, the way forward was to explore the scriptures in a rational and unbiased way. The objective was a search for proof that there had existed in the early days of Christianity a pure and primitive faith untainted by corruption and that this form of belief could be recovered.

Consequently the 'shape' of the Socinian frame of mind at this time was constructed around concepts of a search for the origins, or the 'primitive nucleus' of Christian truth, untainted by subsequent corruptions. This was accompanied by a conviction that the meaning of scripture should never be twisted, distorted or 'bent' to accommodate the requirements of doctrine, the power of the orthodox churches, or indeed anything else. This set of precepts was as fundamentally important to the mind of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Socinian scholar as the belief itself that Christ had been no more than human. In

the scholar's mind, these rules of faith and interpretation meant that he rejected the theological 'systems' of dogma which seemed to have perverted the original historical truth revealing the nature of early Christianity and Christ himself.

In the Socinian biblical - historical frame of mind there was a rejection of the dogmatic or the abstract in favour of the concrete historical reality of the gospels. Nothing 'external' in the form of human systems or presuppositions should intrude upon the historical integrity of the time and circumstance of the events of the gospel, or on the concrete historical situations in which the gospels were written. In other words, the scholars of the radical English Enlightenment had created for themselves a method in biblical criticism which was characterised by a search for origins and a strong feeling for the integrity of the historical reality which had to be evaluated and investigated on its own terms. Unlike Priestley's views on secular history, its emphasis was on the search for historical origin, and on the elimination of intrusive systems and abstractions in favour of concrete realities and circumstances. Indeed in some respects it was a frame of mind which was ideally suited to the development of new historical ideas. Although there had been an interest in historical criticism within radical theological circles in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, the ideas of Joseph Priestley, supported in metaphysical terms by his materialist philosophy, and in theology by his analysis of the formation of 'corruptions',<sup>1</sup> brought it into sharper focus and drew it to the attention of a wider circle. This was the context within which John Kenrick's early thought was formed.

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<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Priestley, *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (London, 1871).

However, from his intellectual beginnings in a strictly rationalist context concerned with universal values and timeless truths, Kenrick came to favour concepts of the uniqueness and diversity of historical forms and their organic modes of development. Through the medium of ancient myth and the traditions of nations he came to appreciate the idea of cultural relativism, and his toleration of the religious practices of primitive ages indicated that he held a view that values were created within a specific historical context. His integration of history and myth were underpinned by that form of English Romanticism which had adapted the mechanisms of associationism to the creations of human imagination. He also discovered a frame of mind on his part which understood the development of languages from different sources in a historical way. Ideas of the organic development of language and nations were conducive to the formation of a new consciousness which appreciated the flux and change of human history and the concept of the birth, life, decay and death of nations.

In the field of literature he rejected the rigid standards of taste imposed by neo-classicism and instead celebrated the Romantic idea of natural, spontaneous human creativity. His biological approach to the problem of the origins of man led him to believe in separate origins of different racial groups and consequently pointed elements of his thought on this subject towards the racial theories of the later nineteenth century. His separation of religion and science and his preference for the idea of a religion of feeling which could not be challenged by reason was a rejection of Priestley's great synthesis of God, man and nature. It also concurred with the Romantic rejection of natural law in favour

of human experience. This acceptance on Kenrick's part that reason could not provide answers for that heartfelt emotion which underpinned the foundations of religious belief meant that there had developed in his thought a dualism between the physical and the spiritual worlds which were similar to elements of the thought of Richard Price.

Thus John Kenrick became a Unitarian Romantic, much like his younger contemporaries in the Unitarian movement, James Martineau and John Hamilton Thom. Influenced by Coleridge and Immanuel Kant, Martineau had led a movement to transform Unitarianism's dry, Priestleyan rationalism into a more spiritual form of belief. Although he came to such an intellectual position by a very different route, Kenrick's thought formed a new structure in accordance with Martineau and Thom, and also with the post-Kantian Idealism of the mid-nineteenth century which interested thinkers such as Baden Powell, Benjamin Jowett and Henry Mansel.

How all this came about in the thought of John Kenrick was a complex process which involved many diverse influences. Clearly, German thought had a major effect on John Kenrick's intellectual development. This was evident from his correspondence with G.W. Wood concerning the purchase of German books over a long period of time. Also, his interest in German thought over the five decades of his productive life may be judged by a comparison between the German content of the library of Exeter College,<sup>2</sup> which he attended as a teenager, and that contained in his own personal library, sold after his death in 1877. In the Exeter catalogue of 1800, which listed more than 1,800 works by

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<sup>2</sup> Exeter College Library List, Harris Manchester College Library, Oxford, MS. MNC Misc. 4.

just under 900 authors, there appeared only a few works by German writers such as Bengel, Michaelis and Mosheim. Contrastingly, when Kenrick's own library was auctioned almost eight decades later, in 1878, the catalogue showed that of the 1,500 works listed, around forty five per cent of them were sourced in the German-speaking states.<sup>3</sup> The direct influence of German ideas on John Kenrick was particularly apparent with regard to his approach to language, and literature also. His thoughts on the development of languages over time and of their separate origins, their organic development and their interaction with human thought were very similar to the ideas of German philologists such as Herder, Humboldt and Jacob Grimm. In his understanding of the new forms of literary criticism Kenrick may be compared, for example, with Wilhelm von Schlegel.

Indeed, it is also true that Kenrick's individual engagement with the complex series of influences which dominated his intellectual development towards a more Romantic frame of mind began in a significant way with the German scholar Heyne's approach to the interpretation of classical myth. In this particular case, however, Kenrick's own rules of Unitarian historical biblical criticism came to the fore. It is possible to see in his essay of 1816 a striking example of the interplay between the ideas of the context of his Unitarian faith and a new intellectual formation. Nowhere is the process of interaction between one set of ideas and another clearer than in this area of Kenrick's early scholarship. Kenrick integrated the thoughts of the German classicist C.G. Heyne

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<sup>3</sup> *Catalogue of the Theological and Miscellaneous Portion of the Library of the Late Rev. John Kenrick, M.A., of York, to be sold by auction by Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, Auctioneers* (London 1878), UCL, Sharpe Papers, 195/196.



on the interaction of history and myth and the local origins of myth with aspects of his own Unitarian approach to biblical criticism.

This was a turning point which had major implications for his thought. The 'springhead' of religious truth in the Unitarian sense became analogous in Kenrick's mind with the primitive, uncorrupted origins of myths, which in the classical sense were localised. On this basis Kenrick historicised the myth, with the result that there was established a new appreciation of cultural relativism. From the tenets of Unitarian criticism also came a separate analogy, between the 'corruptions of Christianity and the 'corruptions' of myth. While the former had been brought about by neo-Platonists and the false doctrines of orthodox Christianity, the 'corruption' of these localised myths was effected by Homer himself, who along with other ancient writers had created artificial systems of mythology which obscured the truth of their origins and true nature.

The importance of history in the discovery of truth, another fundamental Unitarian belief of the time, was a major factor in Kenrick's conviction in the truth of the interaction of history and myth and was underpinned in philosophical terms by English Romanticism. This meant that sense experiences related to historical reality could become in whole or in part those products of the human imagination known as myths. It was this belief in the interaction of history and myth on such a basis which led Kenrick to historicise the fabulous tales of ancient times, and this in turn created a sense of cultural and moral relativism in Kenrick's thought.

From then on, ideas of diversity, uniqueness and separate origins were never far away and they reflected his opinions on both the origins of language

and the origins of man. However, his idea that an acceptance of the Hebrew chronology meant that the races of man must have originated separately was derived from more complex issues. History could not prove man's origins, so Kenrick resorted to the biological argument and as a result he tended to side with physiologists such as Agassiz, who believed that races had originated in different localities. The problem of men's origins, the truth or otherwise of the Book of Genesis and a host of other questions raised by the geology, physiology, ethnology, philology and theology of the mid-nineteenth century appeared insoluble. Kenrick, however, resolved the difficulties which had arisen, in his own mind at least.

With regard to the advances of science, he brought into play his Unitarianism once again, this time with regard to the integrity of scripture. He criticised contemporary writers such as William Whewell and John Pye Smith, who tried to harmonise science and scripture by re-interpreting the latter in various ways. These practices were in conflict with Kenrick's Unitarianism, for the idea that scripture could not be 'bent' for any purpose was a fundamental rule of interpretation. For Kenrick, the harmonisation of religion and science had become impossible, and consequently this was one factor which helped to convince him that the ultimate solution was to separate them and to favour a more spiritual and emotional faith which needed no empirical proof. Thus, although ideas which Kenrick formed during his transition to a more Romantic form of thought were from many sources, it is clear that some of these were adapted, integrated and re-formed in great part by the Unitarianism to which he

remained faithful all his life. The results of the contextual influences on Kenrick's thought were to some extent paradoxical. His unshakeable faith in the integrity of scripture, for example, was an opinion which had been formed in the ultra-rational Priestleyan milieu. Half a century later, Kenrick's defence of scripture against attempts to blend it with mid-nineteenth-century science had the ultimate effect of assisting him to make the decision that, in order to save religion, the faith on which it depended ought to become part of a spiritual dimension which had no requirement for the approval of reason.

How far had Kenrick travelled away from the towering influence of Joseph Priestley along the road to historicism and Romanticism? While Priestley's approach to secular history was concerned with mechanisms and universal mores, Kenrick's came to be dominated by organic imagery and historicist themes of relativism in cultures, values and languages. The processes of associationism in Priestley were absolute, while those dynamics in Kenrick's thought came to be like that of the modified English Romantic idea which linked empiricism and imagination. Most significantly of all, however, while Priestley's perspective on the world was monist, Kenrick's thought became affiliated with a new dualism which granted freedom from reason for the emotions, feelings and spirituality of religious belief, which itself contained its own inherent truth.

Although Kenrick moved towards a Romantic frame of mind in these respects, he never reached the position of German historians who questioned the existence of a uniform human nature. Like most English thinkers, he retained the idea of a common nature in man which agreed with his idea of mankind

belonging to one species. This opinion on human nature never appeared in his work as a major statement, but the indications were clear when, writing of the variety of the customs of ancient nations, including Rome, he thought that there was 'a remarkable amount of correspondence arising from the uniformity of human nature'.<sup>4</sup> Thus although Kenrick's frame of mind never achieved an affinity with the extremes of German Romantic thought, he nevertheless reached a point similar to that of many writers and historians of his time in England. Compared, however, to his radical Enlightenment background, he had come a long way from a Priestleyan world which had been dominated by monism and reason.

The main thrust of this thesis has been to establish some links between the radical English Enlightenment and the Romantic Age through a study of one scholar. However, the thesis has also served to highlight aspects of this period which have been sadly neglected by modern historians of ideas. Despite the importance of their historical criticism, the radical Socinian scholars of late eighteenth-century England have received little credit for their efforts from modern writers, even those of their own ilk. In just under ninety years of publication, from 1915, of the *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, there has been virtually nothing written on the subject of the historical biblical

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<sup>4</sup> John Kenrick, 'New Year's Day in Ancient Rome', in *A Selection of Papers on Subjects of Archaeology and History, Communicated to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society* (London, 1864), p. 221. This paper was read to the society on 5 January, 1864, the year of publication.

criticism undertaken by the scholars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Although Priestley, Thomas Belsham, John Kentish and John Kenrick himself were innovators on the subject of historical criticism, the importance of their ideas and the uniqueness of their approach has been virtually ignored even by writers who concentrate on that particular intellectual community in the same period. In one fairly recent, very comprehensive study on Rational Dissent, a dozen essays deal with the origins of the intellectual movement and its regional, educational, political, legal, social, theological and cultural characteristics. Sadly, however, in this otherwise excellent volume the subject of radical scholarship in historical biblical criticism is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore to his credit that Dennis G. Wigmore-Beddoes, in his study of the affinity between Unitarianism and liberal Anglicanism in the nineteenth century, appreciated to some extent at least the scholarship of the former.<sup>7</sup> He discusses John Kenrick's opinion on the priority of the gospel of Mark and notes Kenrick's emphasis on the point that the biblical critic must deal with the evangelists as human biographers who were exposed to the 'influences of their age, their country, and their family

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<sup>5</sup> For one exception, see John McLachlan, 'Joseph Priestley and the Study of History', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. xix, 4, 1990, pp. 252-263. McLachlan devotes only half of one page of his article to Priestley's historical criticism. See p. 260.

<sup>6</sup> Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion : Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Dennis G. Wigmore-Beddoes, *Yesterday's Radicals : A Study of the Affinity Between Unitarianism and Broad Church Anglicanism in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1971), pp 28-50. Here, the author refers to the work of Timothy Kenrick, Charles Wellbeloved, Thomas Belsham and John Kenrick with reference to higher criticism.

connections'. This, Wigmore-Beddoes concedes, was an advanced position for the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Neither has the relationship between Unitarians and Germans been given very much attention by historians. The radical English scholars and their German counterparts in this period had much in common despite the great differences in their theological and philosophical backgrounds. Both wanted to save religion by bringing it into line with reason, and both employed a similar methodology to achieve their objectives. There was a certain amount of expediency involved on the part of the Unitarians, but this only confirmed the strength of their religious convictions and their commitment to proving the tenets of their rational faith. What was of significance in this scholarly relationship was the fact that the Unitarians, the most rational of intellectual groups within the English Enlightenment context, were in close contact over several decades with a group of scholars whose historical criticism is now seen as prefiguring the German historicism of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> These are two areas in the history of ideas of the period which deserve closer attention.

Conversely, the thesis has shown that J. W. Burrow is entirely correct to argue that the understanding of the ideas of an individual is intensified by close attention to the writers within the context which formed the background to his own intellectual development.<sup>10</sup> It is now clear that fundamental tenets of the context of Unitarianism and its ideas about the interpretation of scripture were important in the development of Kenrick's thought towards a Romantic

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Los Angeles, 1975).

<sup>10</sup> J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent : Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 5.

perspective. It was the basis from which he re-shaped and re-interpreted the characteristics of some of the intellectual influences he encountered.

Consequently, this method is one which should not be ignored in future studies of individual intellectual development.

The other contention here is that a study of an unknown writer has great value with regard to the understanding of the assimilation of new ideas. It has usually been the case that only the great names of philosophy and theology have been granted such close analysis. However, a case study in transition such as this with regard to the historian John Kenrick, which highlights in microcosm the effects on a single individual of intellectual change, has the advantage of being able to show how change is real and tangible. The sweeping generalisations and concentration on 'great thinkers' of works on the Enlightenment by Ernst Cassirer<sup>11</sup> and Peter Gay<sup>12</sup> can never reveal much about the mechanisms of change or convey the concrete, very personal and individual reality of the workings of the single mind at a specific moment in time when the integration of two sets of ideas results in a train of thought entirely new.

The deconstruction of general studies of the Enlightenment and Romanticism<sup>13</sup> has made great strides in the last three decades. Roy Porter's studies of both philosophical movements in national context have done much to show in great clarity the diversity of these movements in thought.<sup>14</sup> However,

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<sup>11</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston, 1965).

<sup>12</sup> Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment : An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (London, 1966) and Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment : an Interpretation. Volume 2: The Science of Freedom* (London 1970).

<sup>13</sup> See the introduction by John B. Halsted (ed.), in *Romanticism* (London, 1969).

<sup>14</sup> Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981) and also Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.), *Romanticism in National Context* (Cambridge, 1988).

the most significant progress with regard to the interpretation of the Enlightenment in particular in recent times has been made in an increased attention to religion as a factor in intellectual change. B.W. Young's study, in particular, has contributed a great deal to this religious perspective.<sup>15</sup> The most significant work, however, is Reill's. It not only considers the continuity of Enlightenment and Romanticism in the German context from a religious point of view involving biblical criticism, but also from analysis of a specific group. Once again, this portrays the reality of change in ways of thinking rather than, as in general accounts, the mere supposition that it takes place.

The above analysis of John Kenrick's transition from Enlightenment to Romanticism is structured around another specific group, the set of writers which formed the context from within which Kenrick's intellectual development took place. The changes in ideas from one frame of mind to the other are confined, however, to himself alone. It is hoped that by this method two key points have been made. The first is concerned with the importance of context, for in this case it clearly shows how Unitarian ideas, confronted with different views, adapted these and helped to mould new intellectual positions on important issues. The second point to be emphasised is that only a microcosmic study such as this is able to convey the real, individual nature of intellectual change.

Finally, this study has traced the development of the thought of an individual from the context of the most rational of English Enlightenment groups to a new frame of mind characterised by the historical and creative ideas of the Romantic

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<sup>15</sup> B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth Century England : Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998).



Age. It shows a rejection by this thinker of the radical monist intellectual position of Joseph Priestley in the late eighteenth century and an acceptance instead of a post-Kantian dualism and Idealism favoured by the nineteenth. Indeed, in many respects, Kenrick's thought by this time was reminiscent of the dualism of Richard Price, who argued against Priestley's monist perception of existence. In charting John Kenrick's intellectual journey, this thesis has opened up a new pathway through the maze of intellectual complexities which litter the main route between the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the Age of Romanticism.

## APPENDIX

### Rich's Shorthand

This form of shorthand was used by John Kenrick, Thomas Belsham, Richard Price and many other Unitarian scholars. It was popular and employed extensively in Dissenting academies throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth. It has proved to be a real hindrance to modern researchers, for a large proportion of the unpublished material relating to Kenrick and others was written in this way. For example, in the library of Harris Manchester College in Oxford there are fourteen boxes of manuscripts written by Thomas Belsham, almost all of them in Rich's shorthand.

This method of recording notes was devised by one Jeremiah Rich in the mid-seventeenth century. Rich wrote out sermons and prayers in tiny spaces on paper in the form of shorthand he had devised. He died in 1660 and his system was first published in 1669. Later editions followed, but copies of Rich's little books are now very rare. <sup>1</sup> Rich's shorthand was updated first by the Nonconformist divine Philip Doddridge, <sup>2</sup> and later by the Unitarian minister Lant Carpenter (1780-1840) of Bristol. These two later versions of Rich's shorthand alphabet are very similar and make it possible for the modern scholar to understand at least the principles which guided the hand of these shorthand writers.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah Rich, *The Pens Dexterity Completed: or, Mr. Riches Short-Hand now perfectly Taught, Which in his life-time was never done*, Fourth Edition (London, 1676).

<sup>2</sup> J. Wood (ed.), *Rich's Shorthand, Improved by Dr. Doddridge* (London, 1830).

There is a large amount of material in the form of lecture notes written by John Kenrick in Rich's shorthand in the Kenrick Papers in Dr Williams's Library. There are, for example, fifteen notebooks containing closely written notes in shorthand,<sup>3</sup> which refer to French, Spanish, English, German and Italian history and literature. One of the most interesting of these is a notebook containing forty-six pages of shorthand on German literature.<sup>4</sup> There is a bundle of loose folios containing the notes Kenrick took during his study trip to Germany in 1819-1820<sup>5</sup> and a selection of other notebooks full of notes on ancient history and addresses to students at Manchester College during his years as professor of history. These shorthand writings contain a large amount of material of great value to the modern researcher interested in this period of the history of ideas in general and in John Kenrick and Unitarianism in particular.

The notes are not completely unintelligible to the modern scholar who has no knowledge of how to understand this shorthand. It was the general practice of Rich's shorthand users to write out in full the titles of the subject matter, proper names and difficult words in order to avoid confusion. Accordingly, these pages are peppered with such names, which provide good clues as to what was the general nature of the contents of the lengthy shorthand passages. This was the case in the forty-six pages of shorthand on the subject of German Literature, which contain almost one thousand lines of shorthand in Kenrick's tiny hand. Reading those names from the very beginning to the end of this forty-page section gives one at least an idea of the content of his lecture notes. Kenrick's

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<sup>3</sup> Kenrick Papers, DWL, 24.107 (25-39).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 24.107 (32).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 24.107 (41).

analysis of German literature begins with some background of the last conflict with Rome, through the Middle Ages and the legends of the early German peoples, to the eighteenth century and finally discusses the writers, philosophers and critics of his own time, including Herder, Kant, Hegel and Fichte. The twenty-three right-hand pages of the notebook contain the bulk of the general text of the shorthand, while the left hand pages are used for extra notes and references.

The following are the names and important words which are visible on right hand pages. They are recorded here as accurately as possible and as they appear on the pages of the notebook. I have inserted dashes to indicate the words which are distinguishable amongst the lines of shorthand, and spaces have been left to denote the end of each page and also to make the list more readable. There is the occasional ordinary word written in full, but it is impossible to know whether these are connected to the previous word or the one which follows. All this method can hope to achieve is to give some indication of the general thrust of the notes :

**Danube – Rh[in]e – Vistula – Tac[itus] Germ 2 – Wehrmann – Rhine – Tac. –  
Teutschen & Deutschen – Tuisto – Hermiones – Isarones – Adelung – Italy  
– Teutones – Hellenes – Angles – Saxon – Teut. – Baltic – Pytheas –  
Guttones – Cimbri – Holstein – Cimmerians – Sweden and Denmark – Baltic  
– Danube – Teutonic – India – Tac[citus] – Rhine – Teut – Vistula – Danube  
– Poland – Danube – Euxine – Nice – Euxine – Huns – Cappadocian –**

**Codex Argenteus – Upsala – Sweden – Wolfenbüttel – Milan – Adelung –  
Marsh – Hochdeutsch – Teut. – Heruli & Vandals – Alemanni – Franks –  
Saxon – Westphal – Angles- Scand – Doric & Ionic – Alem & Frank – Saxon  
– Scand – Baltic – Ionians – Flemish – Aix La Chapelle – Göttingen &  
Wittenburg – High Dutch – Dutch – Holland – Isidoras – Otffried –**

**Charlemagne – Germany – Hildebrand – Grimm – Charlem – feudal – Saxon  
– Franconian – Europe – Italy –Otho – Saxons – James – Sco – Frankish –  
Franc – predominance – Conrad – Henry – Otho – Cathed. In Strasburg –  
1015 – Italy – Swabian – Hohenstaufen – Swabian in Alemanni –  
Minnesingers – Godfrey [of] Bouillon – Troubadours – Conrad – Hohenstr.  
– Bernard – Godfrey – Spain – Italy – Minnesingers –**

**Science – latinizing – Privince of Turin – provençal – Minnesingers –  
nobility – Henry – Fred. – Conrad – Troubadour – Swabian – Swabian &  
Swiss – Thuringia – Wartburg – Minnesingers – Provençal – Teutonic –  
jealousy – chivalry – chivaliry – Troub. – trochaic & iambic – Mnsinger –  
Swabian – Wolfram – Eschenbach – Henry – Rüdiger – Zurich – Swabian –  
Romances –**

**Parcival – Wolfram & Eschenbach – cycle – Charlemange – Heldenbuch –  
Nibelungen Leid – Attila – Huns & Theodoric – Goth – Swabian – chivalry –  
Nibelungen – Brunhildis – Siegfried – Nibelung. –Swabian – Nib-Lied –**

unavenged – Homeric epos – genius – Swabian – Trouveurs – France –  
Troubadours – didactic – Swabian – Esopian – anthology – Arienus –  
Edelstein – Rodolph [of] Hapsburg – Hohenstr. – Luther – Italy –

Golden Bull – Florence – Modena & Ferrara – Vienne – Hung – Polish – Max  
1 – Vienna – 1333 – Heidel. 1346 – Mastersingers – Swabian – Minnesingers  
– Minn. – Mentz – Meistersingers – Strasburg – Augsburg – Nuremburg –  
Ulm – Swabian – Schulfrund – Schüler – Tabulatur – Minnesingers –  
Dominian – Tauler – Tauler –

Quakers – Methodists – Tauler – rhapsodical – Augsburg – Reformation –  
Luther – Wittenburg – Van der Freiheit einis Christen Menschen – Upper  
Saxony – Lower Saxony – Luther – Reformer –

Holbein, Dürer & Lucas Cranach – Roman – Venetian – Flemish – Tasso &  
Ariosto – Italy – Italians – Sweden – France, England – Silesia – Slavonic –  
Poland – Bohemia – Austria – Silesia – Bohemians – Ferdinand 2 – Silesian

Manhood – Heinsius & Grotius – gymnasium – Aristarchus – lingua  
Teutonica – St. Arno of Cologne – der Teuschen poeteray [sic]– prosody –  
Alexandrine – Saxony – Luther – epigrams – Antigone [of] Sophocles –  
Seneca – Silesia – rhythms – Hoffman – Quintilian – Italians – Silesia –  
Hoffman – Louis xiv – Leibniz – Chri. Wolf – Leibniz – Halle –

Vocabulary – met. – philol. – Cortus – Fabricius – Gesner & Ernesti –  
Göttingen – Halle – Göttingen – Hamburg – English – Horace – epochs –  
Hamburg – Horace – Lafontaine – French – lyric – masc. and fem. rhymes –

Haller – Berne – Göttingen – die Alpen – Haller – Swiss – die Ewigkeit –  
Hagedom – Haller & Hagedom – Gottsched & Bodmer – Gottsched –  
Leipzig – Gottsched – Gottschedian – Swiss – Bodmer – Zurich – Breitinger  
– Gottsched – spectator – Bodmer – Milton – Bodmer – Gottsched –  
Schwabe – Friller – Klopstock – Weiland – Gleim – Bodmer – Haller – Milton  
& Klopstock – Gottsched – Bodmer – Schlegel's – Klopstock – Gellert-

Bodmer – Milton's P. L. – Gottsched – Schwabe – Haller – Milton –  
Klopstock – Gellert – Saxon – Gellert – Schlegels – Klopstock – academical  
– personal –

Klopstock – Milton's Paradise Lost – Gottsched – Bodmer – Copenhagen –  
Denmark – Hamburh – Milton – Klopstock – Saviour – Hell – Milton –  
Jewish Sanhedrin – Milton – infinite – anthropomorphic – immaterial –

monotony – hexameter – Gottsched – KI [Klopstock] – rhyme – Denmark –  
Wieland – Voltaire – hallucination

Weimar – F. Schlegel – Ariosto – didactic – Wieland – Horace – Lucian –

Shakespeare – Lessing - drama – Leipzig – Breslau – Berlin – Hamburg –

Wolfenbüttel – fragmente – Reimarus – Hamburg – Lessing – Lessing –

Hamburgische Dramaturgie – Aristotole's Poetic –

Lessing – Lessing – Nathan [the Wise] – Laocoön – Virgil –

aesthetic – phychological – analysis – Lessing – psychology – Lessing –

controversy – Lessing – Fr. Schlegel – Lessing – Herder – Herder – Prussia

– Königsburg – Kant – fragments – Göttingen – Weimar – Herder –

Lessing – Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* –

Herder – humanity – conservative – Herder – didactic –

Ideen – Churchill – Herder – Lutheran – symbolical – Herder – Lessing &

Herder – beaux esprits – Prussia – Parisien – Weimar – collisions –

Ernesti – Leipzig & Heyne & Göttingen – philologers –Winckelmann –

archaeology – Kant – *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* - 1781 – Kant – Fichte –

Schelling – Schleiermacher – Hegel – Schiller – Göthe – Göthe – Klopstock

– Göthe – Klopstock – Göthe – Schiller –Wallenstein – Weimar.



Although it is possible to see the subject matter of Kenrick's lecture notes on German Literature from a list of names, this cannot shed much light on the actual meaning and analysis of the content. It would be possible, however, for the determined modern-day scholar to go a step further and try to decipher the shorthand itself. Despite its rather daunting appearance, the principles behind it are not complex. It is based upon a number of very definite outlines, either horizontal or vertical, which denote the consonants, while the vowels are indicated either by dots alone or by the position of one outline in relation to another. Some years ago Beryl Thomas completed a transcription of the journal of Richard Price with great success.<sup>6</sup> The task, however, was not an easy one and took a very long time. In her article, she explained that although the basic elements that Price used could indeed be identified as those in Rich's system, there were symbols which were idiosyncratic, and variants which Price found convenient to use.<sup>7</sup> As in the emergence of the character of a person's own handwriting, the use of a form of shorthand over a period of years will inevitably result in a personal style familiar to the user alone. Identifying the words represented by idiosyncratic symbols involved the laborious process of establishing a meaning which made sense in all the contexts in which the symbol occurred. Thus, although the transcription of Rich's shorthand is by no means impossible, it is a very long process, even for an experienced reader. For the novice it often takes many hours simply to decipher the meaning of two or three outlines.

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<sup>6</sup> Beryl Thomas, 'Richard Price's Shorthand', *PPN*, 4, 1980, pp. 40-42.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

The following transcription by Beryl Thomas, who has also transcribed shorthand written by Thomas Belsham, is of a passage relating to Herder in Kenrick's notes on German Literature. The passage has been typed in single spacing so that it may be compared more easily with the same passage in shorthand, which has been attached at the end of the transcription. Words in italics indicate that the meaning of the outline is unclear and the reader has done some guesswork, while a series of three dots denotes that the outline in question is unintelligible, either because the writing is faded or due to the fact that it simply cannot be understood. It is possible to follow the general flow of the transcribed notes, but they are often interrupted by a word or phrase which does not seem to be appropriate, and consequently the meaning is not always clear. However, to decipher these notes of Kenrick's on Herder to the extent that she has, Beryl Thomas has achieved a great deal. This was the first time Beryl Thomas had ever tackled John Kenrick's shorthand, and I am very grateful for her efforts.

**In the prose work of Herder, his *Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit*<sup>8</sup> has retained the highest reputation. Many persons sought for a philosophy of history but they had generally adopted some arbitrary definition and limitations as to the purposes of *philology* and then made it their business, in their science of history, to show the concordance of cause to the *products* of the earth, which they had thus assumed to be the main purpose [of philology].**

**Herder finds the comprehensive principle to which the various and at first sight contradictory appearances of history, the rise and conquering of nations, the new integration of wealth, knowledge and power from one generation to another, the multiplicity of law, government and religion in the progress of what he called humanity, which includes in it peoples, civilisations in the limitless sense which we commonly view it, of the *tastes* of life, but the improvement *above all* in his moral and philosophical nature.**

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<sup>8</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* was first published 1784-1791 and appeared in English in 1800.

“It is a revolting state, says he, in the evolution of the church to see people’s ruins heaped upon ruins *either beginning* ... The *bond* of culture alone forms these ruins into a whole in which individual *human* forms indeed are forever vanishing, but the spirit of *humans* ever lives and is ever active.”

In proof of this he shows the world in which he is placed and the relation of his faculties to it, their superiority of argument and the causes which are provided in their nature *attached* or the authority which acts upon his senses. To exist, the desire of improvement ; he shows by what powers he is *fated* to the *cruel* state, to humanity and religion and that from the nature of his *faculties* he is essentially aggressive. He then composes his stories of the history of mankind with the ...tradition of their existence and *appraises* it to the fall of the Roman Empire simply upon its result, in the 15<sup>th</sup> book in the propositions.. That the distinctive forces to which humanity is subject are from their nature weaker than the conservative, that reason and justice are the first ... of his welfare, that a benevolent ... presides over the destinies of man and that there is no human error agency, no purer, more durable and ... than in labouring in conformity with its destiny. Such views are just, as they are moral and elevating, they place history in its true relation to philosophy ... and their influence may be traced in the greater comprehensiveness with which the German historians at last after centuries *included* in their *stories* of political history.

The style of Herder in his earliest works is very *peculiar*, full of figures, abrupt and *rhetorical*, as if the *crudeness* of his feelings *purposely* corrupted his ...away from their straight ... path, and even later on it was too full of sentiment and figure to be well admired by a didactic pessimist and the too rhetorical speech in which it is written is one reason probably why his *Ideen* when *translated* into English which it was by an author the name of Churchill had so little success. Herder had an importance here in promoting the great change in theological values which took place in the middle of the last century in Germany. From what *has* been said of the spirit of his philosophy it must be quite evident that he could never *respect* the doctrines of the Lutheran church in that precise dogmatic form in which the symbolical books *presented* them. He could reconcile religion with philosophy in no other way than by forming the *ideas* and antiquated books of church doctrine in with a new and living principle. In the great change which was then taking place some regarded the ...*articles* of the church as a burden and a constraint upon freedom of choice and generosity of sentiment and sought to rid others of ...at least, but Herder, who had a deep feeling of religion and was especially *permeated* with love and admiration for the benevolent morality of the gospel, and the character of its founder to bring the doctrine of the church into harmony with his feelings and convictions, by *people* laying aside what was incompatible of accommodation and giving a ... and more comprehensive form to what ever was *considered* more the mystery explanation. He *asked* his countrymen to harmonise more with reference to their literary merits than

they had ever done before, and as expressing like the corresponding *productions* of other nations and the *peculiar values*, sentiments and extent of knowledge which prevailed in the age in which they were respectively written. With his fine taste, his animation and his eloquent style it might have *been* expected that he would excel as a pulpit orator, but this was not the case. Though *privileged* by an *avidness*, whose education and *recommendation* might have justified the adoption of either a *temperamental* or an argumentative style, he did neither but too the *plain* time of earnest *contemplation* and ...expressed in the simplest languages. He was listened to with attention from his character, his spirit and his sincerity but his candid presentation bore little mark of his characteristic talents. The earliest of them do show the most that radical *zealous* spirit which Lessing and Herder had, in *many ways* adapted by their respective tastes and talents, introduced into theology was eagerly followed and adopted by their countrymen, till at length it became *possible* to say very little was left of the old evidence of ecclesiastical doctrine. But the aspects of *philology* in Germany were quite different from that which it assumed in France ; even those of the Germans who allowed themselves the least latitude in theological values could never become scoffers at religion as with the *faults* of the beau esprits of France during the corresponding period. However little they might retain of positive belief in the historical evidence or the miraculous *sayings* of revelation, they evidently felt the great truths of natural religion and did homage to the moral worth and importance of the scriptures and of the founder of the Christian religion. ... was *more* religious than before but it ...accommodated itself to that new form of religion which had become prevalent ; it was popular among the great who generally followed German literature, and were devoted admirers of the French in everything, that any thing of the ...of French authorship and *free thinking* was to be found.

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### **PRIMARY SOURCES**

#### **Manuscripts**

##### **Bodleian Library, Oxford**

The library's Modern Manuscripts section keeps a hand-written list of books in John Kenrick's study, a list which he compiled from 1869. See John Kenrick, 'Catalogue of Books in My Study, Begun October 26, 1869', Bodleian Modern MSS, MS. Don.e.119.

##### **Glasgow University Library, Special Collections and Archive**

These contain material, including lecture notes and some correspondence relating to John Kenrick's teachers at Glasgow College in the years 1807-1810, whose material is to be found in collections under their own names. They include testimonials regarding Kenrick from James Mylne, who was Professor of Moral Philosophy from 1797 to 1839 and John Young, Professor of Greek from 1774 to 1821. The sources also contain copies of some letters from John Kenrick to his brother George and his great uncle, Samuel Kenrick of Bewdley (1728-1811).

##### **Harris Manchester College, Oxford**

There are a number of sets of lecture notes, some in longhand and others in shorthand, taken by students at Manchester College over the years of Kenrick's professorship. There are letters scattered throughout the various collections, but the most significant part of the material related to John Kenrick is a long series of

letters to the Manchester College trustees George William Wood (1781-1843) and William Rayner Wood (1811-1884), which reveal something of the business of Manchester College, York and Kenrick's interest in German scholarship.

### **John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Unitarian College Collection**

This body of material, which has never been properly catalogued, has some lecture notes. It contains, for example, John Kenrick's, Lectures on Early Roman History, notes taken by G.W. Wood at Manchester College, York, 1842. It also contains letters from Nathaniel Lardner to George Benson and a variety of material related to both early and later Unitarianism.

### **Kenrick, Mrs Anne, Private Collection**

The diaries of Rebecca Kenrick, a cousin of John Kenrick, are contained in some private family papers owned by Mrs. Anne Kenrick, of Edgbaston, Birmingham. They give some sketchy details about one or two incidents in the life of 'cousin John' in his later years and about the lives and connections of other members of the Kenrick family.

### **Liverpool University Archives, Beard Correspondence and Rathbone Papers**

The Rathbone Papers and the Beard Correspondence have some letters written in the 1860's and 1870's from Kenrick to the Unitarian ministers, J.H. Thom and Charles Beard, who was editor from 1864 to 1879 of the *Theological Review*, a journal to which Kenrick contributed in his later years.

## **University College London Library, Sharpe Papers**

This collection contains correspondence of John Kenrick's father, Timothy Kenrick (1759-1804) and other members of the family. It also holds personal papers of John Kenrick and his wife Laetitia, including letters and the autobiographical notes on his early life which Kenrick wrote for his wife. [John Kenrick's Account of his Early Life, Written for his Wife in 1870-1872 and copied by Elizabeth Reid in 1878, Sharpe Papers 189/2.] In addition, there are catalogues of Kenrick's library, most of which was sold after his death in 1877. The notebooks containing his 'Lectures on English Literature', in two parts, UCL, Sharpe Papers 186/187. N.D., have proved enlightening.

## **Dr Williams's Library, London**

The library holds the largest collection of unpublished manuscripts, notebooks, correspondence and personal papers which relate to John Kenrick. Included in the collection are fifteen notebooks, eleven lectures, a bundle of notes taken in Germany and a dozen addresses to students at Manchester College, York, all of which are in shorthand (see Appendix) and which form a large amount of material. In longhand there are 15 notebooks on history and literature and a bundle containing longhand drafts of eleven papers read before societies, including 'Causes Which Have Retarded the Civilization of Africa, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.49 (a). The essay is not dated, but probably was written in the 1840s. Also in longhand, there are a number of early essays, the majority of them dated 1808 and 1809, two of the years he spent at Glasgow

College. This bundle contains essays mentioned in the text of the thesis and includes, for example, 'Illustrations of the Origin of the Passions from the Doctrine of the Association of Ideas', 29 December 1808, DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.50 (d), and the later essay, 'A Specimen of the Application of Historical Principles to the Explanation of the Greek Mythology', DWL, Kenrick Papers, 24.107.50 (n), 1816.

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