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The religion of the Non-Jurors and the early British enlightenment: a study of Henry Dodwell

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Abstract

The article considers the fundamental motivations and associated theological thought of those involved in the Non-Juring schism in the Church of England in the period after the Revolution of 1688. It indicates and exemplifies how that thought is to be related to wider intellectual conflicts of the period, considered as constituting an early phase of Enlightenment/Counter-Enlightenment debate. The works of the leading Non-Juror theologian, Henry Dodwell, and in particular his writings on the destiny of the soul, serve as an area of focus. Extensive reference is also made to the equally prominent Non-Juror, Charles Leslie.

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When, shortly before his death in 1711, Henry Dodwell returned to the jurisdiction of the Church of England, Bishop Gilbert Burnet of Salisbury found this most distinguished former Non-Juror to be his subject. Dodwell was bluntly accusing his bishop of heresy and, indeed, few that had any concern for being accounted orthodox could have been more hostile to Dodwell's views than Burnet. Playing the pastor, he criticised his castigator for giving scandal to 'the little ones, or weaker Christians' by his originality and untempered boldness of thought; but he also acknowledged the profound erudition on which this speculation rested and felt obliged to pay tribute to a life which had been 'not only without blemish, but exemplary'.¹ He could have done no less. Dodwell had declined to take holy orders, in order to better champion clerical authority; had consequently considered it improper to hold a fellowship in Trinity College, Dublin; and had lost the Camdenian prælectorship at Oxford for his refusal to take the oaths of allegiance to

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¹[Gilbert Burnet and] Henry Dodwell, *Four Letters which Passed between the ... Bishop of Sarum and...* (London: Richard Smith, 1713), pp. 7–9 and p. 18.

William and Mary. In brief, he devoted a lifetime to the scholarly defence of his religion, but manifested a sensitivity of conscience which prevented him from accepting the status and material rewards that should have accrued.²

John Overton, the most comprehensive historian of the Non-Jurors, echoed Burnet in more sympathetic tones. He praised Dodwell's virtues, declared him to be 'the keenest and most learned' of all the Non-Jurors and noted his consequently pre-eminent role in determining their affairs.³ More recently, the depth of his influence has been remarked upon. Dodwell has been pointed to as the true shaper of Non-Juror thought⁴—and thus, implicitly, as an important figure in Anglicanism's High Church tradition as a whole. Such claims require justification; but they indicate sufficiently that Dodwell's work warrants attention. It has attracted very little and this circumstance is explicable. If a history of thought remains attached to a concern with sources and reception, it will hardly devote much attention to Dodwell. Though he contributed much to Non-Juror thought and that tradition continued to be valued, he himself was but little read beyond his own period. More lucid expounders of High Church principles were preferred. In any case, he had been devoted to a historical method in theology and the conclusions of his historical investigations dated quickly.

With other approaches to the history of thought, however, Dodwell's work becomes more noteworthy. In the introduction to a recent work of some relevance to the study of Dodwell, Joseph Levine laments a lack of attention among historians to the history of argument. 'The ambitious efforts that have been made to describe a consistent outlook for the Renaissance, for example, or the Enlightenment or Romantic period, have usually faltered just as far as they have neglected or suppressed contemporary alternatives.'⁵ For Dodwell, scholarly activity never justified itself. It served the morally urgent task of religious polemic. In consequence, replies were numerous and the study of Dodwell is necessarily a study in the history of argument. The Non-Juror theologian who came to surpass Dodwell in influence in the eighteenth century and later, Charles Leslie, explained the quantity of learned writing which his friend had provoked by setting out his speculations on the nature and destiny of the soul: '... I am afraid party goes further in the case, than concern for religion.'⁶ Of course, it would be a confession of ignorance of early eighteenth-century England to inquire whether the parties Leslie referred to were political or ecclesiastical: no profitable distinction can be drawn. Scholarship was not exempt from the period's rage of party and in discussing this it seems best to refer to

² Dodwell lacks a modern biographer. Recourse must be had to the justly criticized contemporary work by Francis Brokesby, *The Life of Mr. Henry Dodwell ...* 2 vols. (London: Richard Smith, 1715).

³ John H. Overton, *The Nonjurors: their lives, principles, and writings* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1902), pp. 229–238.

⁴ John Findon, "The Nonjurors and the Church of England 1689–1716" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1978), pp. 152–183.

⁵ Joseph M. Levine, *Between the Ancients and the Moderns: Baroque culture in Restoration England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1999), p. vii.

⁶ *Rehearsal*, 5 July 1707.

that ‘one ... debate about the defence of the true nature of a Christian community’⁷—that between the proponents and opponents of the early British Enlightenment. At times, the topics of Dodwell’s discourses scarcely appear central to that debate, as we recall it. However, contemporaries perceived their relevance. Our recollection stands in need of correction. In brief, if Levine’s admonition is borne in mind, Dodwell should prove almost as interesting a figure to those concerned with England’s Enlightenment tradition, as to those more interested in the ecclesiastical tradition for which he contended.

The present study, then, is concerned with the inter-relatedness of the intellectual conflicts of late Stuart Britain. It regards Henry Dodwell as a figure representative of the Non-Jurors and, accordingly, investigates his motivations in refusing the authority of the regnant church. Since treatment of the causes of the schism has been superficial, this topic in ecclesiastical history warrants attention in itself. However, consideration of disposition and purpose is also preliminary to an inquiry into Non-Juror thought. In the principled, conscientious hostility to change in politics and religion, which lies at the heart of the Non-Juring stance as stated by Dodwell, there is already a statement of the movement’s place in the history of Enlightenment/Counter-Enlightenment debate. This can be investigated further with a consideration of the fundamentals of Dodwell’s divinity—made clear through his treatment of particular topics—in relation to the themes of that debate. Such investigation, however, shows positive as well as negative relationships to Enlightenment thought among Non-Jurors, inevitably so, in view of debate’s requirement of common ground.

The perception of Dodwell as representative of his co-religionists may well be considered doubtful. Down to the present, commentators have been inclined to adopt the accusations of Dodwell’s more extreme contemporary critics and make much of what the sympathetic Overton gently described as ‘eccentricities of speculation’ (see footnote 3, p. 230). Here, indeed, we have another reason for the neglect of Dodwell, even by those concerned with the history of Anglican theology. If Dodwell is perceived as utterly singular as a thinker, as he has been, both his capacity to reveal the Non-Juring mind and the value of his work as illustrative and explanatory of central areas of contemporary intellectual concern are, at least, much reduced. A definitive statement about Dodwell’s intellectual relationship to other Non-Jurors must await further work. However, this study will advert to the closeness of thought between Dodwell and, chiefly, the more widely esteemed Leslie. The relating of Dodwell’s divinity to wider currents of thought can be taken as, in itself, a reply to the accusation of eccentricity. However, the choice of Dodwell’s work on the nature and destiny of the soul as the exemplification of his thought in general is significant also. For it is the controversy which he provoked with his massively argued thesis that true immortality was a sacramentally bestowed gift of the church—inevitably the true episcopal church—

⁷ John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: the age of Enlightenment in England 1660–1750*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), p. 11.

which has most frequently provided justification for the accusation of eccentricity.⁸ It is best to meet doubts about Dodwell's significance where they are the strongest.

This study is concerned with the place of the Non-Jurors in the streams of contemporary thought. Yet, commentators have often failed to observe a true distinctiveness in their thought. High Churchmen, such as Overton, had party motives for their assertion that the Non-Jurors were not, for the most part, 'in any way different ... from plain English Churchmen'. Divergence sprang only from the matter of the oaths (see footnote 3, p. 391). It is, indeed, just and profitable to note the substantial intellectual unity between Non-Jurors and Juring High Churchmen, as Robert Cornwall has done in studying the ecclesiology of both groups.⁹ John Findon has asserted that the schism did not originate in a distinctive set of theological stances, though the Non-Jurors acquired this later. The secession itself came simply because of the oaths (see footnote 4, pp. 36–59). It may be asked, however, if, among many, refusal of the oaths did not manifest at least a tendency in religious thought, absent or less marked among those who behaved differently. Indeed, it is possible to speak of more than a mere tendency. The positions which Dodwell articulated, albeit often in response to his circumstances as a Non-Juror, were consciously held and extensively developed long before his renunciation of the Camdenian praefectorship.¹⁰ Other Non-Jurors showed a similar constancy.¹¹

The tendency of thought expressed in refusal of the oaths is, in fact, observable in the extensive contemporary debates about them and can be advanced as the underlying characteristic of emergent and later Non-Juror thought. Consideration of the lawfulness of the oaths to the new rulers did not involve discussion of the acceptability of their claims to the throne. Such discussion would hardly have been welcome to the new regime. The point in dispute was the relative importance of natural allegiance, owed to a de facto ruler, and legal allegiance—a conflict between circumstances and principles. The Non-Juror was one who concluded that prevailing military and political circumstances could not offer justification for a mutation of principles.¹² This disposition to repudiate accommodation to a changing reality

⁸ Ernest G. Rupp, *Religion in England 1688–1791*, Oxford History of the Christian Church. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 15–16 and Philip C. Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 60–67. Almond's 'tentative' description of Dodwell's views is misleading in particulars as well as tone. A more reliable description, wholly faithful to Dodwell and generally using his own words, is to be found in Brokesby, *Dodwell*, 2: 563–609.

⁹ Robert D. Cornwall, *Visible and Apostolic: the constitution of the church in High Church Anglican and Non-Juror thought* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Thus, for example, Archbishop King of Dublin remarked in 1709 that Dodwell's understanding of the nature of the soul had been known to him for more than thirty years. See King to Dodwell, 17 August 1709, English Letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40,785), fol. 126v, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

¹¹ The founding of Christian apologetic on a particular form of historical argumentation, which, as indicated below, was central and pervasive in the work of Leslie, had been adopted by him before he elected to become a Non-Juror. See Robert J. Leslie, *Life and Writings of Charles Leslie...* (London: Rivingtons, 1885), pp. 20–24 and 88–89.

¹² David M. Jones, *Conscience and Allegiance in Seventeenth-Century England: the political significance of oaths and engagements* (Rochester, NY: Univ. of Rochester Press, 1999), pp. 201–227.

manifested itself in innumerable debates throughout the history of the Non-Juring movement. It is particularly clear in Dodwell. The belief that Christian truth was not to be accommodated to the demands of the age, but rather was to be armed to confront them more effectively, appears to have stood as a rubric for all of his work.

This disposition to confront rather than accommodate change for the worse, or more accurately the degree to which it was cultivated, may be regarded as the defining characteristic of Non-Juror thought, the more convincingly if, as Paul Monod has contended, that of Whiggery was pragmatism.¹³ More importantly for the present discussion, this disposition was also the determinant of the relationship of the Non-Juror's mind to the wider intellectual world. In brief, it was the support of a sophisticated Counter-Enlightenment stance. For, in the end, the enemy to be confronted by the Non-Jurors was always that welter of 'new mental and moral values, new canons of taste, styles of sociability and views of human nature', which we have reified as the Enlightenment.¹⁴ In illustration of this, it is worthwhile to explore further Non-Juror intransigence on the matter of the oaths. That we may not begin an account of the Non-Juring movement simply with the oaths, as Findon suggests, is indicated by Dodwell's statement to the bishop of Derry and future archbishop of Dublin, William King: 'Though the oaths were the occasion, they were not the cause of the schism.' It was the episcopal deprivations their introduction occasioned which were of consequence. Dodwell remained faithful to this assertion. The death of the last of the deprived bishops provided his justification and that of a number of others for abandoning separation from the regnant church. However, the deprivations raised wider questions than the immediate moral one of adherence to a particular communion. In the same correspondence, Dodwell depicted the action of the Non-Jurors as the taking of a stand against the perennial threat lay power offered to the rights of the church.¹⁵ This was the general point of principle which Non-Juror writings chose to emphasise repeatedly. Indeed, an ecclesiology centred on the point of authority was the driving force of their theology.

It appears that there is no need to look further into the Non-Juring position in order to relate it to the wider pattern of that contemporary debate we descry among the less easily definable phenomena identified with the Enlightenment. Historians of philosophy have conventionally provided a focus for comprehension of the seemingly endless diversity of this debate by asserting it to have been an epistemological one, about the role of the individual's reason in the search for certain knowledge. Recent historiography has struggled to render the discussion less abstract. Champion, for example, reminds us that, if it possessed epistemological significance, for contemporaries the conflict was, more pressingly, 'about who or

¹³ Paul K. Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People 1688–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), p. 349.

¹⁴ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (London: Penguin Press, 2000), p. 14.

¹⁵ [Historical Manuscripts Commission], *Second Report of ...* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1871), pp. 240–242.

what institution held the authoritative interpretation of truth'.¹⁶ Pocock also depicts a social conflict, incorporating his approval of the partisans of the Enlightenment, as defenders of a civil society threatened by disruptive religious institutions.¹⁷ The Non-Jurors' plain assertion, in the articulation of an authoritarian ecclesiology, that it was the church which was the possessor of the authoritative interpretation of truth, appears, at once, to point to their place in the Counter-Enlightenment vanguard. So too does their emphasis, in their elaboration of the matter of the oaths, on conflict between civil and religious power. However, the matter is more complex. For the opponents of the Non-Jurors were equally upholders of ecclesiastical power. The difference between the two sides sprang from motivation and tactics.

John Dennison, in a study pointing to the 'utilitarian, opportunistic ... factors', involved in the formation and adoption of Enlightened stances by elites engaged in the pursuit of self-interest, adverts to the 'prototypical' figure of Burnet, the *bête noire* of both Dodwell and Leslie. His desire to defend his church's status and enhance its authority was real, but took the form of compromising its religious stances to accommodate Dissenters of equally irenic disposition. The Non-Juring movement might be numbered among Dennison's 'remnant pockets of fundamental orthodoxy' opposing such trends,¹⁸ though the renewed rejection of comprehension by parliament as the basis of an ecclesiastical settlement in 1689 suggests that this description underestimates the extent of commitment to such positions. The Non-Jurors' inability to adopt such a tactic in defence of the Church of England as Burnet favoured is explained by a difference in motivation. For the Non-Jurors, ecclesiastical power was no end in itself, but was rather the servant of doctrine. In an attempt to deliver an old friend, Bishop William Lloyd of Lichfield,¹⁹ from adherence to the regnant church, Dodwell made the point thus:

... I know no one article of faith of greater importance than our Catholic doctrines concerning the authority of the church as a society independent on the state, upon which the security of the whole faith as a trust depends; this power of ... stopping the mouths of heretics, and rebuking them with all authority and keeping the trust committed to the church by cutting off those who trouble the church with innovations, however [?] the magistrate be disposed...²⁰

The Non-Juror hostility to an accommodation of Anglican positions, which was urged by contemporary conditions, was pervasive and extensively defended. Accommodation was opposed as wrong in itself, as a betrayal of the Christian

¹⁶ Justin A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: the Church of England and its enemies, 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), p. 10.

¹⁷ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*, vol. 1 of *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), p. 7.

¹⁸ James T. Dennison, "The Twilight of Scholasticism: Francis Turretin at the dawn of the Enlightenment", in Carl L. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, eds., *Protestant Scholasticism: essays in reassessment* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1999), pp. 245–247.

¹⁹ This William Lloyd, the complying bishop of St. Asaph and then Lichfield, is not to be confused with the bishop of Norwich, who led the Non-Juring movement until his death in 1710.

²⁰ Dodwell to Lloyd, 15 February 1696, Birch Collection, Add. MS 4275, fol. 192r, British Library.

faith, but also as a mistaken, self-defeating tactic. This was true whether the accommodation was to be made because of the extensive survival of Dissent or the brutal reality of the Dutch invasion and usurpation. When, in the 1670s, Dodwell took Dissent as his primary target, in his *Separation of Churches from Episcopal Government*, he inveighed against the inherent sinfulness of schism, and also denounced the Dissenters' claim to a right of private judgement, 'especially in matters doctrinal'.²¹ Ecclesiastical authority could not be defended by accommodating those whose fundamental principles undermined it. With the overthrow of King James and the establishment of Presbytery in Scotland, the threat was far more alarming. Leslie devoted much effort to warning 'those called Moderate Churchmen' that they were mere dupes of the Dissenters. 'Now let the Moderate Men look to it... They will all fare alike when the fish is caught, and be hung up to dry among the old nets.'²²

In addressing those who differed from them on the matters which had made them a distinct communion, the Non-Jurors used the same argumentation: the accommodation which the clergy of the regnant church had reached was both futile and dangerous. It was not, though, necessarily more reprehensible than that. The course followed by the compliers could be represented as simply a tactical blunder, rather than a moral fault or intellectual error. This charitable view had a good understanding of the clerical mind of the day to support it. When Dodwell spoke to King of defending the church's rights against lay encroachment, in the correspondence mentioned above, he recorded his agreement with the bishop's claim that 'Mr. Dodwell and I cannot be very distant in our principles either as to civil or ecclesiastical power, however our practice disagrees.'²³ Practice, for the compliers, sprang from an assessment of their circumstances. Speaking to them on a political level, in his *Querela Temporum*, Charles Leslie accused them of having erred disastrously in this, but of no moral fault. They had 'come in to the government' unwillingly, only 'out of a prospect to preserve the church', fearing that it would meet the same fate as its sister in Scotland. It would avail them nothing, however, in view of King William's antipathy to them. Nor were the king and the politicians the only enemies. The laity was infected with 'a spirit of atheism', indifference to religion and a hatred of 'what they call priestcraft', all manifested in Whig Erastianism. It was to such a laity that the clergy of the regnant church had surrendered by accepting lay deprivations.²⁴

Leslie's animadversions on the laity are noteworthy and reflect a view by no means singular. Addressing Bishop Edward Stillingfleet of Worcester, in an effort to dissuade him from taking part in a harassment of the Non-Jurors, Dodwell expressed much the same sentiments. He declared, perfectly sincerely, his affection

²¹ Henry Dodwell, *Separation of Churches from Episcopal Government...* (London: Benj[amin] Tooke, 1679), p. xix.

²² [Charles Leslie], *The New Association of Those Called Moderate Church-Men with the Modern Whigs and Fanatics ...* 3rd ed. (London: n.p., 1702), p. 3.

²³ King to Dr. Madden, 19 January 1700, English Letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40,785), fol. 122v.

²⁴ [Charles Leslie], *Querela Temporum: or the danger to the Church of England...* [London: n.p., 1694]. See especially pp. 1–2 and 19–20.

for his ‘old brethren and fathers’ who had taken the oaths and recognised that many were ‘of our mind as to their principles’. By their compliance, however, they had made themselves the tools of ‘[a] laity indeed concerned for no religion, but envious of your honours and covetous of your revenues...’ and had made this laity ‘visibly worse’.²⁵ Such a sympathetic view of the complying clergy, the inclination to account for the schism with reference to the ‘violence of the laity’ *tout court*,²⁶ and the very frequent attribution to the laity of the most deplored contemporary views, serve as a clear indication that the accommodation which the Non-Jurors rejected was not merely on particular matters of principle. Rather, they rejected accommodation with the changing moral and intellectual trends they observed in the nation’s elite, commonly gathered together under the rubric of ‘the early Enlightenment’.

While, for the Non-Jurors, the disposition of the laity towards religion made compromise impossible, as a betrayal of Christianity, for the compliers, it made it inevitable: there was no alternative to their strategy of adaptation to the times. William King put their case to Dodwell, whose influence, he thought, might restrain the dangerous polemic of Leslie. The archbishop no doubt felt a particular need to justify himself. For he was, in fact, blackmailing Leslie with a document which indicated that, at the Revolution, he had been among the first to encourage the taking up of arms against King James. If indeed, King contended, Leslie succeeded in representing Anglican ‘principles as inconsistent with the Revolution’, then the laity would choose Revolution principles and turn against the church. King suggested that he himself accepted the force of Leslie’s argumentation, as he piously dressed his willingness to dissemble as pastoral concern.

And sure it is neither wisdom nor religion to lay a temptation in the way, which we know beforehand they will not resist. Neither our saviour nor his apostles treated the Jews in that manner, but rather than put them on such a trial, bore them with their errors. In many instances they saw they could not hope to reform them without hazarding their rejecting Christianity by the force of their prejudices.²⁷

King’s complaint against the Non-Jurors was, in other words, that which would be made by Burnet against Dodwell himself in his correspondence with his newly submissive subject: the positions he commended endangered the faith of the ‘weaker Christians’. Burnet did not, however, have in mind the danger of rendering Anglicanism repellent to those who considered their interests bound up with those of the new regime. What disturbed him was Dodwell’s proclamation of the

²⁵ Dodwell to Stillingfleet, 26 January 1693, Rawlinson Letters, vol. 68 (S.C. 14,949), pp. 29–42, Bodleian Library, Oxford. The theme of danger from the laity was a constant one in Dodwell. See, for example, the beginning of the unpaginated preface to his *Two Letters of Advice ...* (Dublin: Benjamin Tooke, 1672).

²⁶ Henry Dodwell, *An Admonitory Discourse concerning the Late English Schism...* (London: J. Nutt, 1704), p. 233.

²⁷ King to Dodwell, 30 August and 29 November 1710, English Letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40,785), fols. 132–135. The later letter relates more particularly to King’s blackmail attempt and tends to confirm the claim, made in print by Burnet, that Leslie was responsible for the first shots fired in the Irish war. For details of the accusation see Leslie, *Charles Leslie*, pp. 65–69.

inauthenticity and intellectual inadequacy of the religion of those who shared his desire to render Anglicanism accommodating to other Protestants and agreeable to those taken with the era's rationalism. Dodwell's enthusiasm for resting orthodox belief on the historical phenomenon of Christianity allowed him to be sceptically dismissive of argumentation resting on *sola scriptura* and rationalist principles—the very foundations of Burnet's accommodating religion (see footnote 1). In truth, though, the complaints of the archbishop of Dublin and the bishop of Salisbury were one: that Dodwell and the Non-Jurors declined to accommodate their religion to the changes that had occurred. King spoke of political, and Burnet of intellectual change. For the remaining part of this study, it is the latter which will be of concern. Regrettably, brevity demands exemplification, rather than more extensive exposition and Dodwell's approach to the use of scripture must be left aside in favour of comment on his relationship to early Enlightenment rationalism.

The persistent inclination to dismiss Dodwell's exposition of his doctrine of the soul as the product of an eccentric mind, which was given particularly hostile expression by Macaulay, is at once called into question by the mere extent of the ensuing controversy. If later commentators have found it easy to dismiss the views set forth in Dodwell's *Epistolary Discourse, Proving ... that the Soul is a Principle Naturally Mortal* and in sequels, contemporaries apparently did not. In further defence of Dodwell, it may be pointed out that he had supporters as well as opponents. Charles Leslie was most willing to allow his friend's first substantial exposition of the doctrine of the soul to serve as the interpretation of his own statements.²⁸ When, a few years later, Dodwell's views on the matter had attracted considerable attention and were being attacked, Leslie was still willing to defend them publicly.²⁹ Dodwell had other allies. As he remarked to his protégé and intimate, Thomas Hearne: 'God has been pleased to raise up the zeal of unknown friends in my defence.'³⁰ Among these, he doubtless had in mind Joseph Pitts, who devoted the labour of writing two learned tomes to that defence.³¹

The publication of Dodwell's views on the nature and destiny of the soul created a *cause célèbre*; but much of the product of the chattering classes of late Stuart England gives little insight into what was really at issue between the Non-Juror leader and his more able opponents—and it is that which relates this part of Dodwell's thought to the Non-Juring stance in general. Many simply failed or did not try to understand Dodwell's views. The pastoral complaint of his most distinguished opponent, Samuel Clarke, that he had given comfort to 'the loose and profane' by appearing to argue against eternal rewards and punishments when he spoke, in his title, of the natural mortality of the soul, was not without some

²⁸ Charles Leslie, *A Sermon Preached at Chester against Marriages in Different Communions...: and the same subject farther prosecuted by Henry Dodwell...* (London: Charles Brome, 1702), unpaginated preface.

²⁹ *Rehearsal*, 5 July 1707, 11 February 1708, 14 February 1708.

³⁰ Dodwell to Hearne, 26 November 1706, Rawlinson Letters, vol. 25 (S.C. 15,581), fol. 20r.

³¹ In addition to his '*Ἡ Χώρας Δοθεῖσα*', cited below, see Joseph Pitts the Elder [A Presbyterian of the Church of England, pseud.], *Immortality Preternatural to Human Souls ...* (London: George Sawbridge, 1708).

foundation.³² When Dodwell complained that such critics were disregarding what he actually said, Archbishop King replied that very few were capable of understanding that.³³ Then again, much of the comment and debate was attributable, as Leslie observed, to Dodwell's identity as a Non-Juror. There was, for example, Thomas Milles, who, if Hearne is to be believed, was anxious to display his scriptural and patristic scholarship in a politically correct good cause 'as an aid to preferment'.³⁴ He duly obtained it in his appointment to the see of Waterford and Lismore. Edmund Chishull, a former chaplain of the Turkey Company, and John Turner, the vicar of Greenwich, displayed their own motivations better than Dodwell's in their interpretation of their opponent as a mere party writer—and in their abuse.³⁵

As a preliminary to understanding what was truly at issue, the importance in contemporary debate of the subject which Dodwell had treated should be recalled. It was certainly, at the turn of the century, no less a major theme in Enlightenment/Counter-Enlightenment debate and source of anxiety for those concerned with religious apologetic, than it was throughout. Most notably, it was Locke who had occasioned concern when he found that philosophy did not demonstrate the soul's immortality. He was thus 'justly censured for having ventured too far in the disservice of religion'.³⁶ Still, his name was too considerable and his position too recurrent in philosophy simply to be disregarded. In the course of his reply to Dodwell, John Norris, the English disciple of Malebranche and decidedly orthodox churchman, took a similar position and contended that philosophy could offer only 'probable arguments' for the soul's immortality.³⁷ Locke had also alarmed many with the tendency to materialism in his speculation on the relationship of thought to matter. Indeed, the controversy Dodwell raised was occasion for this topic to be aired. When Clarke, fresh from his triumphs in the Boyle Lectures of 1704 and 1705, entered the lists against the Non-Juror, he found his Cartesian psychology, so favoured by contemporary Anglican apologists, assailed by Anthony Collins, the Deist, who was keen to develop the suggestion offered by Locke.³⁸ Contemporaries found the theological writers William Coward and Henry Layton just as alarming on account of the materialist stances they adopted, though their reduction of the soul to a function of the body was made possible by firm assertions about the latter's resurrection. Coward's assertion that Christian belief about immortality had been

³² Copy of a letter from Samuel Clarke to Dodwell [after 22 May 1706], Birch Collection, Add. MS 4370, fol. 2r.

³³ King to Dodwell, 19 November 1709, English Letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40,785), fols. 128–129.

³⁴ Quoted in Harry Carter, *A History of the Oxford University Press* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1: 265.

³⁵ See, for example, Edm[und] Chishull, *A Charge of Heresy Maintained against Mr. Dodwell's late 'Epistolary Discourse'...* (London: Samuel Manship, 1706), unpaginated preface and pp. 3–6; and John Turner, *Justice Done to Human Souls...* (London: John Wyat, 1706), p. 6 and pp. 105–124.

³⁶ Chishull, *Charge of Heresy*, p. 11.

³⁷ John Norris, *A Letter to Mr. Dodwell concerning the Immortality of the Soul of Man ...* 4th ed. (London: Edmund Parker, 1722), pp. 78–82.

³⁸ Texts of the extended exchange between Collins and Clarke are to be found in Samuel Clarke, *A Letter to Mr. Dodwell: wherein all the arguments in his 'Epistolary Discourse'... are particularly answered...*, 6th ed. (London: James and John Knapton, 1731).

perverted by pagan philosophy (see footnote 7, pp. 140–141) and Layton's unimaginative presentation of his position as criticism of orthodox apologists³⁹ rendered their materialism even more obnoxious than it might otherwise have been.

The anxiety of apologists who had to cope with such writings serve as justification for the complaints of those such as Clarke and King. Dodwell had argued, theologically, not merely that reason did not justify belief in the immortality of the soul, but that it could not. He had taken a more extreme position than Locke's, usually identified by contemporaries with the early sixteenth-century philosopher, Pietro Pomponazzi. Moreover, he had failed to secure himself against the misunderstanding of his theology by the *profanum vulgus*. In truth though, King's concern was not so much that Dodwell was not being understood, but more that he would be and found, by some, convincing. For the confrontational attitude King deplored in Dodwell's political stances was, in this instance, being articulated in the intellectual sphere. Contemporary developments, in this instance in philosophy, called for defiance not adaptation. The futility of compromise with the new regime in the effort to preserve the episcopal church and the necessity of challenging it with an uncompromising restatement of the doctrine of passive obedience was paralleled by the futility of acceptance of contemporary philosophy. The Cartesian concept of the soul did not, in fact, demonstrate its immortality. The correct course of action lay in confronting contemporary philosophy with the truth of revelation. Worse, from King's viewpoint, was the fact that Dodwell's intransigent position possessed a credible intellectual foundation.

Dodwell argued that the immortality of the naturally mortal soul depended entirely on the 'divine pleasure' and added that revelation was 'the only rational means of notifying the divine pleasure, in facts entirely depending on' it.⁴⁰ Thus the view Dodwell expounded in his works was concisely expressed by his declaration that '[t]he immortality of the soul is a revelation of the Gospel, and therefore not capable of being proved by reason' (see footnote 40, pp. 104–108). The conclusions of his speculative investigation of the content of that revelation were extensively criticised and such criticism forms a significant part of the whole debate. However, such speculation, much as he was anxious to express it, was hardly what induced him to write. His primary concern with the proposition in the former part of the statement was its ability to demonstrate the conclusion in the latter part. When his biographer, Francis Brokesby, set out to explain 'Mr. Dodwell's hypothesis concerning the immortality of the soul', it was with the inutility of philosophical psychology, and especially that of the Cartesians, that he began.⁴¹ Dodwell and his followers positively rejoiced in what others found so disturbing—that philosophy could not give 'an idea of immortality, even as our best and most acute modern

³⁹ Layton began his series of pamphlets on this topic with *Observations upon a Sermon intituled 'A Refutation of Atheism from the Faculties of the Soul' ... preached April 4, 1692* [n.p., 1692?]. This was an attack on one Richard Bentley's Boyle Lectures. For a further extended and representative example of Layton's writing, see *A Search after Souls and Spiritual Operations in Man*, 2 vols. [n.p., 1693–1694].

⁴⁰ Henry Dodwell, *An Epistolary Discourse: proving ... the soul is a principle naturally mortal, but immortalized actually ... by its union with the divine baptismal Spirit ...* (London: R. Smith, 1706), p. xxi.

⁴¹ Brokesby, *Dodwell*, 2: 563.

philosophers have expressly acknowledged, after all their most exquisite human reasoning'.⁴² That demonstrated the danger and futility of trusting in philosophy, fundamentally because it was incompetent in the matter. Apologetics was thrown back on revelation. King was dismayed. As he did when considered the question of the church's stance towards the Revolution, he protested that the church's faithful would not be forced to adopt a view which ran against their prejudices. The argument could not be allowed to rest on revelation, since among most, he opined, revelation was accepted because of a previous, rational belief in the immortality of the soul.⁴³

Clarke was inevitably grieved by Dodwell's attack, which made good use of rationalist critiques he found threatening, on a crucial area of natural theology. In response, he restated the Cartesian argument which derived the immortality of the soul from its immateriality.⁴⁴ Norris took the same tack⁴⁵ and, though it fitted ill into the preface of a work which sought to encounter Dodwell on his own scriptural and patristic ground, Milles thought it desirable to express extended support for this bit of Clarke's natural theology, now assailed by Collins.⁴⁶ However, Dodwell's work challenged not merely natural religion in general, but Clarke's exposition of it in particular. For Dodwell's argumentation on the nature and destiny of the soul revealed a system of thought which seemed to oppose, in the most radical way, that which was displayed in the recent Boyle Lectures. There Clarke had argued from the divine attributes to a system of ethics, the rational character of which in turn supported the natural religion from which he derived it. Clarke insisted that 'the fitnesses and unfitnesses of things which... impose [moral] obligations on all rational creatures, are prior to and independent of all will, law or command'—including the divine will.⁴⁷ It would be hard to imagine a more perfect following of the path set for philosophy by one of the Enlightenment's prototypical institutions, the Royal Academy of Berlin, when it memorably called for '[t]he defence by rational argument of the divine personality and the moral responsibility of man'.⁴⁸

Dodwell challenged Clarke perhaps most fundamentally by eschewing philosophy and addressing his topic with the methods of historical theology. Nevertheless, Dodwell's conflict with Clarke is most easily understood as a nominalist/realist one. In the first place, Dodwell severed the links between Clarke's discussions of the divine

⁴² Joseph Pitts the Elder [A Presbyterian of the Church of England, pseud.], *Ἡ Χάρις Θεοῦ: ... the Holy Spirit the author of immortality ...* (London: George Sawbridge, 1708), p. 8.

⁴³ King to Dodwell, 17 August 1709, English letters, c. 29 (S.C. 40, 785), fol. 126v.

⁴⁴ Samuel Clarke, *A Letter to Mr. Dodwell: wherein all the arguments in his 'Epistolary Discourse'... are particularly answered...* (London: James Knapton, 1706), pp. 33–35.

⁴⁵ Norris, *Letter to Dodwell*, pp. 85–152. See especially pp. 91–109. See also his *Philosophical Discourse concerning the Natural Immortality of the Soul ...* 4th ed. (London: Edmund Parker, 1722), pp. 33–37.

⁴⁶ Thomas Milles, *The Natural Immortality of the Soul Asserted and proved from the Scriptures and First Fathers...* (Oxford: Anthony Peisley, 1707), pp. ii–xvii.

⁴⁷ James P. Ferguson, *Dr. Samuel Clarke: an eighteenth century heretic* (Kington, Warks.: Roundwood Press, 1976), pp. 28–29.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Ulrich Im Hof, *The Enlightenment*, trans. William E. Yuill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 111.

attributes and morality. His doctrine of the soul was directed by the belief that no term could be predicated unequivocally of God and his creatures. Brokesby explained:

Mr. Dodwell, from I Tim. 6: 16, in general concludes that God is he, ‘ο μόνος ἔχων ἀθανασία, who only hath immortality; that he alone is ἀγέννητος καὶ ἀφθαρτος, John 5: 26, who has ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ; that nothing else can be immortal, but as it derives its immortality from him, who is αὐτοζωή (see footnote 41, p. 566).

Leslie pointed out that such a rejection of unequivocal predication was frequently expressed in the theological writings of the day and indicated his own approval of it, ‘as it tends to magnify the nature of God’ (see footnote 6). The God thus liberated from human language and reasoning and now bound only by his own revelation, proceeded to destroy Clarke’s moral philosophy. For Dodwell, true human immortality and mere extended post-mortem existence, involving suffering as appropriate, were both entirely contingent. Clarke insisted that it was ‘far more agreeable to right reason and our notions of God, to derive the immortality of the soul ... from its own nature, than from the divine pleasure’. From his eschatology Dodwell derived his moral theory. The refusal of the divinely bestowed immortality, explicitly in the rejection of the gospel preached by the church or implicitly in any other kind of sin, was a repudiation of the divine will—and in this rebellion lay the evil of sin. Clarke protested that to find the formal cause of all sin in rebellion, rather than ‘in the original depravity of the actions themselves, in their contrariety to right reason and to the light of nature and conscience’ was ‘to make God, in the hardest sense, act arbitrarily’.⁴⁹

The present study has depicted the Non-Juror position, and Dodwell’s in particular, primarily with reference to an intransigent, confrontational disposition and a zealous religious motivation, regarding arguments as illustrative of this. There was unwillingness to compromise intellectually convincing and conscientiously held stances in order to accommodate such changes in thought, behaviour and political circumstance as the period witnessed. The expression of this disposition was consistency in according a priority of intention, warranted in any case by the inherent importance of the task, to the defence of Christian orthodoxy. It is by discernment of such dispositions and purposes that the Counter-Enlightenment position of the Non-Jurors and other positions on the vast spectrum of debate in the period become clear. The study of the content of debate yields much less clarity of division, simply because, even at extremes, much was held in common. Debate in the period would hardly have possessed the liveliness they did, had this not been so. If

⁴⁹ Clarke, *Letter to Dodwell*, 1st ed., p. 7 and pp. 13–14. Clarke received competent support from an enduring ally, Daniel Whitby, best known as the author of the *Ethices Compendium*. In his *Reflections on Some Assertions and Opinions of Mr. Dodwell...* (London: H. Clarke, 1707) he ranged through a variety of criticisms of the *Epistolary Discourse*; but his chief concerns were with Dodwell’s moral teaching, dealt with at the beginning of his reply, and the severance of eschatology from discussion of the attributes of God, at which he protested at the end. See the first arabic pagination, pp. 1–13 and p. 138.

King was a consistent critic of Dodwell, it was precisely because he stood intellectually close to him, not merely, as noted above, in the matter of the relationship between church and state, and also in more profound matters, as he demonstrated in his own discussion of the divine attributes.⁵⁰ Dodwell would, no doubt, have acknowledged this. It would have been less agreeable for him to acknowledge that even as he and other Non-Jurors took up their most confrontational stances against manifestations of the individualistic rationalism they deplored, they embraced the same rationalism in another form—and one simultaneously attracting the interest of those to whom they were most hostile.

The tendency of late seventeenth-century philosophical scepticism to develop into fideism has been noted by Alan Kors, whose citation of Thomas Baker's *Reflections upon Learning* suggests that the Non-Jurors might be associated with this trend.⁵¹ Dodwell himself has been identified, by David Berman, with a school of Irish Counter-Enlightenment philosophers designated as fideists.⁵² Baker, Dodwell and, we may add, Leslie, did hold very similar views, though they had little to do with continental scepticism or the Lockean empiricism of which the Irish thinkers described by Berman made use. Further, the designation 'fideist' is quite misleading. Rather, they were exponents of a historical rationalism, embraced by such as Toland⁵³ in their assaults on Christianity or Christian orthodoxy.

Baker's *Reflections* shows little engagement with contemporary philosophy. The author's acknowledged predecessors were chiefly early sixteenth-century humanists, whose relationship to the history of scepticism was, at best, slight.⁵⁴ The noteworthy feature of the work is its markedly more favourable attitude to history than to any other field of intellectual activity and the value it ascribes to sacred and ecclesiastical history.

In all this chapter, I have said nothing of ecclesiastical history, from which, next to sacred story, we have the greatest assurance; and even from profane story (notwithstanding all its flaws) we have more assurance than in most other sorts of learning (see footnote 54, p. 121).

⁵⁰ David Berman, "Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment in Irish Philosophy", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 64 (1982): 155–159.

⁵¹ Alan C. Kors, "Skepticism and the Problem of Atheism in Early-Modern France", in Richard H. Popkin and Arjo Vanderjagt, eds., *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), p. 203.

⁵² Berman, "Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment", p. 150. See also Berman's continuation of this article, "The Culmination and Causation of Irish Philosophy", in the same volume, pp. 257–279.

⁵³ For Toland's interest in history, see Stephen H. Daniel, *John Toland: his methods, manners, and mind* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1984), p. 23 and pp. 25–26, where Toland's emphasis on the mutability on Christianity is spoken of, and chap. 6. See also Robert E. Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy: a study in adaptations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 5–6.

⁵⁴ [Thomas Baker], *Reflections upon Learning: wherein is shewn the insufficiency thereof in order to evince the usefulness of revelation*, 6th ed. (London: James and John Knapton, 1727), unpaginated preface. Cf. Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1979), pp. 20–25.

Baker amply demonstrated his adherence to his own words. Grieved at the reception of his book in some quarters, he spent the rest of his life as one of the eighteenth-century's most devoted servants of historical study.⁵⁵ He was hardly exceptional among those of his communion. This enthusiasm is to be related to the continued commitment of the Non-Jurors to the historical method in theology and to patristic studies in particular and this, in turn, to be seen together with their characteristically late seventeenth-century zeal for conforming the English church to the pattern of primitive Christianity.⁵⁶

In adverting to pastoral practice, Dodwell much commended the religious societies set on foot by Anthony Horneck, which were imbued with this purpose.⁵⁷ In his perception of the church's needs, no task seemed greater⁵⁸ and his scholarly work in its entirety was an expression of this view, not merely in its content, but also in its method. A desire to recreate primitive Christianity combined with a decided inclination to elevate dogmatic theology, investigated with a historical heuristic, over natural theology. The practitioners of the latter, who required little learning or critical judgement, were to be discouraged from moving from their own—admittedly legitimate—activity to engage in that possible only to the skilled historian. Such was Dodwell's view from the beginning of his scholarly career⁵⁹ and he no doubt held to it to the end. It was desirable to give those who asked philosophical questions philosophical answers. In truth, though, apologetics did not absolutely require philosophical reasoning and Dodwell was inclined to dispense with it. The 'preliminaries' of apologetic were superfluous, he argued, as they were 'necessarily concluded by the same proof by which the revelation itself is proved'. This proof was strictly historical. It was 'proof of facts from facts of miracles and prophecies', particularly those of the New Testament. He had sought to put this approach into practice in his writings on Irenæus and Cyprian, taking it to be 'the easiest and most fitted to the capacities of even the meanest men, who are all concerned to agree in the belief of truths of this nature'.⁶⁰ In brief, Dodwell was no enemy of rationalism. His

⁵⁵ For an account of Baker, see Frans Korsten, *A Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Baker* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), pp. xi–xli. For more extensive comment on the *Reflections*, see the same author's "Thomas Baker's 'Reflections upon Learning'", in G.A.M. Janssens and F.G.A.M. Aarts, eds., *Studies in Seventeenth-Century English Literature, History and Bibliography: festschrift for Professor T.A. Birrell...* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), pp. 133–148.

⁵⁶ Eamon Duffy, "Primitive Christianity Revived: religious renewal in Augustan England", in Derek Baker, ed., *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History: papers read at the fifteenth summer meeting and the sixteenth winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*. Studies in Church History, vol. 14 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 287–300.

⁵⁷ Dodwell to Leslie (transcribed by Francis Cherry), 1 July 1699, Cherry MSS, vol. 23 (S.C. 9,797), pp. 157–8, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Dodwell's expression of hope for the retrieval of 'Catholic communion' in his *Preliminary Defence of the Epistolary Discourse concerning the Distinction between Soul and Spirit...* (London: George Strahan, 1707), unpaginated 'Address to My Adversaries' [5–11].

⁵⁹ Dodwell, *Letters of Advice*, unpaginated preface [15–27] and pp. 212–245.

⁶⁰ Dodwell to John Falconer, 27 February 1711, St. Edmund Hall MSS, vol. 14, p. 47, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

disdain for—but not complete dismissal of—the rationalism of the philosopher was made possible only by his embracing the rationalism of the historian.

If Dodwell was the most erudite proponent of this approach, Leslie was the most successful. He exemplified it most clearly in his *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*, a celebrated work well into the nineteenth century, and his *Short and Easy Method with the Jews*.⁶¹ However, his commitment to historical rationalism was also manifested when he dealt with the principles used by Catholics and Quakers as foundation for their claims to certain knowledge.⁶² When the Counter-Enlightenment philosophers of Dodwell's *alma mater*, discussed by Berman, pressed Lockean sensationalism to extremes to argue that knowledge of spiritual realities could be obtained only from revelation, an improved and more fashionable philosophical basis for the dependence of Dodwell and Leslie on history was created. The union of an epistemology destructive of natural religion and historical rationalism was to prove a highly attractive basis for eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century apologetic, notably among the Hutchinsonians.⁶³ History hardly proved an impregnable fortress for defenders of orthodoxy. After all, Arians and Socinians, such as William Whiston, Samuel Clarke and Nathaniel Lardner, could also muster their patristic arguments. Yet the ability of Trinitarian orthodoxy to hold its own against such opponents and the enduring heavy dependence of apologetic on miracle and prophecy suggest that the position of the Non-Jurors discussed here was by no means a foolish one.

⁶¹ *The Theological Works of the Rev. Charles Leslie* (Oxford: at the University Press, 1832), 1: 1–248.

⁶² For anti-Catholic argumentation, see *ibid.*, 3: 1–225. See especially pp. 25–58 and 77–87. For anti-Quaker argumentation, see *ibid.*, 4: 21–359. See especially pp. 44–119.

⁶³ C.D.A. Leighton, “‘Knowledge of Divine Things’: a study of Hutchinsonianism”, *History of European Ideas* 26 (2000): 159–175.