

# William Godwin and the Puritan Legacy

In the debates occasioned by the outbreak of the French Revolution one contribution, though relatively neglected today, was accorded preeminent status. This was erstwhile Dissenting or Nonconformist minister William Godwin's anarchist critique of *ancien régime* Britain, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793).<sup>1</sup> As Godwin's fellow Nonconformist William Hazlitt later famously remarked, compared with Godwin, Edmund Burke was considered merely a "flashy sophist" and Tom Paine, "Tom Fool".<sup>2</sup> Godwin scholars now agree that the moral and political philosophy of *Political Justice* was heavily indebted to its author's immersion in the culture of Rational Dissent;<sup>3</sup> and more recent work has begun to uncover the extent to which Godwin's later, less-studied writings represent a reappraisal and even repudiation of the philosopher's "puritan" religious heritage.<sup>4</sup>

This essay's analysis of Godwin's engagement with his (and Britain's) puritan and Dissenting legacy is significant in two respects. First, it offers a reading of two of Godwin's lesser known, later writings and thus contributes to our appreciation of a thinker whose activity and influence in the nineteenth century is still poorly understood.<sup>5</sup> Second, this topic offers a unique point of entry into the bewildering complex of religious, political and historiographical tensions comprising the intersection of Britain's long eighteenth and long nineteenth centuries. This pivotal period saw the emergence of a radically reformed British polity, an important element of which addressed long-standing issues of religious profession and allegiance. In this context, it is surely helpful

to engage the extensive historical reflections of one of English letters' most productive and generically versatile practitioners.

Thanks to the work of J. C. D. Clark, we are all now well aware of the extent to which *ancien régime* England was a “confessional” state fundamentally defined by its repudiation and exclusion of Protestant Nonconformity.<sup>6</sup> A crucial moment in the formation of the identity and public perception of English Dissent was, of course, the Civil War period of the 1640s and 1650s. Yet Godwin was not directly to address this formative period in Dissenting history until 1815, when, after a decade of mostly pseudonymous writing, he published *Lives of Edward and John Philips, Nephews and Pupils of Milton*, obviously a rehearsal for his later *History of the Commonwealth of England* (1824-28).<sup>7</sup> *Lives of Milton's Nephews* marks the onset of an interest in the seventeenth century which was to prove Godwin's central literary preoccupation over the next 15 years.<sup>8</sup> With a particular focus on the novel *Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England* (1817)<sup>9</sup> and *History of the Commonwealth*, this essay pursues Godwin's wide-ranging and hitherto understudied interrogation of the historical and philosophical meaning of seventeenth century puritanism in terms of his own intellectual development and the shifting discursive contexts of the early nineteenth century. Before engaging with these key nineteenth century texts, however, it is firstly necessary to establish the nature and discursive situation of Godwin's significant earlier writings.

In his collection of essays, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature* (1797), Godwin briefly, if unequivocally, broke his early silence on the revolutionary events of the seventeenth century:

The period of the Stuarts is the only portion of our history interesting to the heart of man. Yet its noblest virtues are obscured by the vile jargon of fanaticism and hypocrisy. From the moment that the grand contest excited under the Stuarts was quieted by the Revolution [of 1688], our history assumes its most insipid and insufferable form. It is the history of negotiations and tricks, it is the history of revenues and debts; it is the history of corruption and political profligacy; but it is not the history of genuine, independent man.<sup>10</sup>

Such a perception contrasted starkly with that of the majority of Godwin's compatriots for whom Britain providentially enjoyed a sane via media between the abortive Puritan republicanism and antinomianism of the seventeenth century Interregnum and the despotic, crypto-Catholicism extinguished by the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The historiographical cheerleader for this view was David Hume whose sceptical and conservative *History of England* (1754-62) actually increased in popularity in the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Within this "restoration 'politics of culture'"<sup>12</sup> characteristic of the long eighteenth century Protestant Dissenters, as well as Roman Catholics, were considered imperfectly patriotic and ultimately untrustworthy.<sup>13</sup> And although mainstream prejudice against Protestant Nonconformity waned across the eighteenth century it was reignited by the debate over the French Revolution,

specifically, by Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).<sup>14</sup> Therein, Burke painted contemporary Dissent as a manifestation of an extreme form of rationalistic Protestantism which, like the forms of natural religion championed by the leaders of revolutionary France, would result in the destruction of Christianity, civilization and social order in Europe.<sup>15</sup> Revolution and reaction thus seriously set back the burgeoning cause of Dissenting emancipation.<sup>16</sup> As late as 1818, Hazlitt was to remark that the Dissenter was still considered a "half-Englishman...a secret disturber of the peace, a dark conspirator against the State."<sup>17</sup> In the first decades of the long nineteenth century, then, the Dissenting tradition so crucial to Godwin's philosophical identity was mostly denied its historiographical expression precisely because it constituted a necessary and defining Other to a mainstream British identity threatened by a variety of foreign and domestic revolutionaries.

Godwin's *Political Justice* was conceived as a direct response to Burke.<sup>18</sup> It proposed that the moral and intellectual independence characteristic of the Rational Dissenter ought to be the basis and end of the ideal political society. In trusting solely to their reason and eschewing irrational traditions, instincts and the delusive promptings of the senses, individuals were bound to reject medieval forms of government such as monarchy and aristocracy, institutions which inculcated dubious human qualities in their subjects. Godwin argued that the widespread operation of independent ratiocination would inevitably sweep away this corrupt *ancien régime* and replace it with a democratic (and ultimately an anarchist) polity characterized by intellectual autonomy, public spirit and benevolence.<sup>19</sup> This argument was underpinned by a typical (though mostly tacit) Protestant, rationalist historiography which saw intellectual liberty, enlightenment and

democracy as inevitable and salutary consequences of the Reformation's destruction of Catholic superstition and intellectual despotism.<sup>20</sup> Unlike Burke, for whom an emotional attachment to tradition nurtured and necessitated religious activity, Godwin saw intellectual autonomy or rational independence as the essence of true religion<sup>21</sup> and, by extension, the basis and guarantee of a just political society.<sup>22</sup>

In reaction to the French Revolution and the wars which issued from it, popular opinion tended to side very much with Burkean conservatism against the rationalism and republicanism of enlightened *philosophes* like Godwin. Partly in response to this criticism and partly as a consequence of his own independent intellectual maturation, Godwin came to revise the message of *Political Justice*. In later editions of 1796 and 1798 he continued to assert the moral poverty of monarchical and aristocratic political institutions but stressed, confusingly, that humanity was as likely to be productively motivated by habit, instinct and emotion as it was by reason and that personal felicity and social progress consisted both in the rational individual disengaging himself from social life and having his sensibility continually modified by sympathetic contact with others.<sup>23</sup> As Mark Philp has shown, the complexity and occasional contradictory nature of the final edition of *Political Justice* owes much to Godwin's attempt – subsequent to the work's first edition – to replace a vocabulary drawn from the ethos of Rational Dissent with one more indebted to moral sense philosophy and the literature of sensibility.<sup>24</sup> That the first edition thus required correction was, for Godwin, a direct consequence of its indebtedness to the Calvinism in which he had been reared.

The Enquiry concerning Political Justice I apprehend to be blemished principally by three errors. 1. Stoicism, or an inattention to the principle, that pleasure and pain are

the only bases upon which morality can rest. 2. Sandemanianism, or an inattention to the principle, that feeling, and not judgement, is the source of human actions. 3. The unqualified condemnation of the private affections...It will easily be seen how strongly these errors are connected with the Calvinist system, which had been so deeply wrought into my mind in early life, as to enable these errors long to survive the general system of religious opinions of which they formed a part.<sup>25</sup>

Godwin's repudiation of this ("Calvinist") celebration of the emotionally and socially detached ratiocinative individual also found its way into Godwin's most popular and enduring work, *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794).<sup>26</sup> In this pioneering detective novel and psychological thriller Godwin stressed the extent to which Britain's corrupt legal and political system ("things as they are") – as symbolised by the aristocratic Squire Falkland – conspired to persecute and occlude the individual seeker after truth and justice (Caleb Williams). It has also been noted that the novel deliberately, if covertly, engages with the Civil War period. Gary Kelly has emphasised Godwin's perception – and that of others on both sides of the political and ideological divide – of the profound parallels existing between England in the 1790s and in the 1640s and 1650s, that is, between the adherents of the "new philosophy" and the radicals of the Interregnum.<sup>27</sup> Burke, for one, found the Dissenters' identification with the French revolutionaries quite in keeping with their descent from puritan regicides and republicans.<sup>28</sup> Kelly details Godwin's conscious exploitation of this Civil War connection in the novel through the use of particular names. Falkland's historical namesake, Lucius Cary, the second Viscount Falkland was a "gallant cavalier martyr" of the Civil Wars renowned for his high sense of personal honour. The surname Williams was that of two

men, John and Roger, both persecuted for their resistance to Archbishop Laud's "papist" reforms of the state church, and both of whom figured highly in the unofficial pantheon of Nonconformist saints. Kelly justly insists that *Caleb Williams* "was, from the evidence of the nature and names of its characters, an allegory of Protestant, not to say Dissenting history: the struggle for truth and for liberty, and the continual risk of incurring for that reason all the horrors of intolerance, persecution and civil strife."<sup>29</sup> While it is usual and appropriate to read the novel as a critique of the myriad ways in which established power structures oppress the individual, it can also be interpreted as an indictment of the excesses of "Protestant" individualism and intellectual autonomy and thus as part of Godwin's 1790s revisionism.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, contrary to the general tone of *Political Justice*, the novel reveals Godwin's revised view that rather than fostering justice and sociability, intellectual autonomy and the pursuit and disclosure of truth are more likely to promote social dissension and personal alienation.<sup>31</sup>

While never abandoning his belief that Protestantism marked "the dawn of intellectual liberty to man",<sup>32</sup> Godwin was increasingly aware of the dangers associated with "Protestant" autonomy in general and with the epistemological and moral shortcomings of Calvinism in particular. The most elaborate and unequivocal statement of his disquiet with this Calvinist legacy occurs in *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1803).<sup>33</sup> In this cultural and intellectual history of the fourteenth century, Godwin explicitly reassessed the value of traditional political institutions, arguing that feudal inequality and mutual obligation contributed markedly to the development of modern sociability. He additionally proposed that the medieval Catholic Church, in its emphasis on ritual and the sensual, non-rational acquisition and expression of religious sentiment, was similarly productive

of benevolence and social solidarity. At the same time, significantly, *Life of Chaucer* emphasized deleterious aspects of what Godwin designated the “puritan temper” – a tendency to rational individualism, emotional detachment and immaterialism.<sup>34</sup>

As a consequence of the general conservative reaction in Britain and, to a large extent, of his extremely frank biography of his recently-deceased wife Mary Wollstonecraft, Godwin became notorious as an unpatriotic advocate of revolutionism, rationalism and atheism.<sup>35</sup> While *Life of Chaucer* went some way toward restoring his reputation, with the publication of the novel *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling* (1805), Godwin finally passed beyond redemption.<sup>36</sup> So offensive to polite sensibilities was Godwin’s reputation that, when forced by financial difficulties to go into business as a writer and publisher of children’s books, he was constrained to write under a variety of pseudonyms.<sup>37</sup> The decade after the publication of *Fleetwood* was, by Godwin’s own admission, an extremely difficult period creatively. He later noted that whatever popularity he had enjoyed as a novelist reveals the extent to which the ideas informing these writings reflected those of the public. Against this popularity, he contrasted the relatively poor reception of those of his recent writings which he had “written merely from a private sentiment”, that is, without an eye to public taste. The first of these works was his *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809) in which he asserted the Burkean notion that moral progress and a sense of community depended upon an intimate, pseudo-biological relationship with our ancestors; the second was his *Lives of Milton’s Nephews*.<sup>38</sup>

In *Lives of Milton’s Nephews*, Godwin undertakes to demonstrate the egregious moral and intellectual qualities of Puritan republicanism. He argues that Milton’s political and poetic work display an unparalleled originality and integrity, and considers *Paradise Lost*



possibly the greatest poem ever written.<sup>39</sup> Milton is presented as a paradigm of Godwinian man – an ideal creature possessed of benevolence, intellectual independence and true piety, as well as the literary ability to encourage others to emulate these qualities.<sup>40</sup> Study of Milton's exceptional character is instructive, Godwin believes, not for what it tells us about human nature as it is, but for the way in which his ideal example can inspire us productively to reform or reconstruct humanity.

As noted above, conservative denigration of seventeenth century republicanism and Puritanism intensified in the radical and revolutionary atmosphere of the 1790s; and it was maintained in the first two decades of the nineteenth century by fears of French imperial expansion and by government repression of radical and libertarian movements. During this period, historical discussion of the Interregnum appears to have been driven entirely off the respectable agenda. Dwight A. Culler notes that not until George Brodie's *History of the British Empire* (1822), and Macaulay's essay on Milton (1825), did a view of the events, contrary to the still hugely influential conservatism of Hume's *The History of England*, achieve any kind of public credibility.<sup>41</sup> Understandably, then, Godwin's approach to the history of the mid-seventeenth century in *Lives of Milton's Nephews* met with little success; and his shift of focus and genre in *Mandeville* illustrates his intention to appeal to an audience having little sympathy with, or interest in, the culture and character of puritan republicanism. In *Mandeville*, then, Godwin delays discussion of the *republican* Puritans of the seventeenth century in order to focus on their Presbyterian and royalist counterparts.

## II

The misanthrope Charles Mandeville is born in Ireland in 1638, and at the age of three witnesses a massacre of Protestants by Catholics. As the sole survivor of this traumatic event, he is taken to England where he is reared by his uncle Audley and a tutor, the Reverend Hilkiah Bradford, a learned, sincere and pious man whose only fault is a bigotry towards Roman Catholicism so intense that it borders on insanity.<sup>42</sup> After Bradford's death Mandeville is sent to Winchester school where he encounters Clifford – a boy of great charm, courage, intelligence and popularity. Although initially spellbound by Clifford, Mandeville comes to envy him. He also believes Clifford's character to be superficial and morally suspect by comparison with his own more sober and sombre virtues which, to his annoyance, receive none of the commendation and adulation showered by his schoolfellows on Clifford.<sup>43</sup> After studies at Oxford, Mandeville attempts to join a royalist plot to restore the King. He is proposed as secretary to the commander-in-chief of this operation, but is beaten to the post by Clifford who is more favored on account of the commanding officer's preference for Episcopalians over Presbyterians.<sup>44</sup> Mandeville's disapprobation of Clifford intensifies into implacable hatred and mental instability upon the latter's conversion to Catholicism and development of affection for Mandeville's sister, Henrietta. Mandeville attempts to stop the marriage of Henrietta and Clifford by kidnapping his sister; yet she is rescued by Clifford who in a sword fight permanently marks the face of Mandeville. At this point the novel abruptly concludes.<sup>45</sup>

B. J. Tysdahl remarks that the permanent scarring of Mandeville's face exemplifies the extent to which his character is the product of social and historical conditioning: he is an

individual “maimed by the march of history”.<sup>46</sup> Misanthropic individuals recur in Godwin’s fiction, usually as illustrative of his fundamental epistemological conviction that “the characters of men originate in their external circumstances”.<sup>47</sup> While a misanthropic personality like that of Bethlem Gabor in the novel *St Leon* (1799) is shown to derive from adverse, uniquely personal circumstances<sup>48</sup>, the eponymous protagonist of *Mandeville* is depicted as the product of circumstances shared by a large segment of the seventeenth century British population. *Mandeville* is an “unflinching exploration of a Calvinist nurture”<sup>49</sup> specially tintured with anti-Catholicism. Mandeville’s memories of the Irish massacre were, he claims, “all the world to me”; and it is a world consequently divided into polar opposites, “the Papist and the Protestant” which he conceives “like two great classes of animal nature”.<sup>50</sup> This exclusivistic and vehement anti-Catholicism ultimately becomes the sole means by which the misanthropic Mandeville defines himself.

Like *Life of Chaucer*, *Mandeville* illustrates Godwin’s growing appreciation of the capacity of traditional aristocratic society (and its religious analogues) to foster solidarity and the production of those personal moral qualities which, in his earlier writings, he had associated solely with democracy. While he is keen to laud the achievements and tendencies of traditional aristocratic and monarchic society, he nonetheless makes a decisive distinction between the Episcopalian royalism of Clifford and the Presbyterian royalism of Mandeville. For Clifford is a “creature of the affections”, and possesses a spontaneity and ingenuousness quite at odds with the more reserved, guarded and ultimately misanthropic Mandeville (man-devil).<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the fundamental incapacity of Mandeville’s puritan religiosity to foster solidarity is evident in his reflections on the

philosophies of, respectively, his Anglican sister, Henrietta and his preceptor, Bradford: “hers was a religion of love: his was a religion of hatred.”<sup>52</sup> The distinctive and superior sociability of Anglican royalism is made explicit upon Mandeville’s visit to Henrietta and her companions at Beaulieu Cottage.

Every thing I saw was amiable; and I threw myself without apprehension into the arms of every one I met. Every thing I saw was frank, and easy, and communicative, and sensitive, and sympathetic. It was like the society of “just men made perfect”, where all sought the good of all, and no one lived for himself, or studied for himself.<sup>53</sup>

Illustrating the extent to which Godwin had moved philosophically and historiographically, this royalist, Anglican community closely approximates the millennial commonwealth of sincerity, frankness and benevolence which was the essence of early Godwinian anarchism, itself the logical outcome of the Puritan religious tradition.<sup>54</sup> Although secluded, Beaulieu evidences a beauty that is in every way continuous with the natural landscape around it, and sympathetic both to that natural world and the world of humanity.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, Mandeville’s home and its surrounds are both barren and desolate, qualities which reflect the human emotions and relations of the inhabitants.<sup>56</sup> And in lamenting the fact that he “belonged to no one...[and] hung loose upon society...”<sup>57</sup>, Mandeville is drawn to question what the outcome of his life and character may have been had he grown up at Beaulieu, rather than at Mandeville House.

I also should have been a member of a community, I should have lived with my fellow mortals on peaceful terms, I should have been as frank, as I now was invincibly

reserved, suspicious, and for ever disposed to regard my neighbor with thoughts of hostility! I should then have been amiable; and I should have been happy! But my fate was determined, and my character was fixed.<sup>58</sup>

While the reader is encouraged to believe that Mandeville's unsociable character could have been avoided had he experienced such an environment, that is, had he experienced a very different personal history, Godwin's main intention is to reveal the broader cultural and historical assumptions which render individuals able to participate so fully and effectively in community life. Significantly, there is a direct and intimate human connection between this Anglican backwater and the medieval Catholic past. Mandeville observes that the district's ruined (Catholic) Abbey was still used as a parish church and the residence of one of the district's "best families".

These circumstances took away the feeling of desolation, which usually accompanies a heap of ruins; and the recollection of the devotion, the habits, and the vast undertakings of past ages, was pleasingly mingled with the neatness, the activity, and the civilization, that continued to occupy the scene.<sup>59</sup>

The ruined Abbey specifically recalls the Tudor attempt to divorce the English people from their Catholic heritage. In *Essay on Sepulchres* Godwin proposed the Reformation under Henry VIII, and in particular the dissolution of the monasteries, as evidence of a deleterious human tendency to recreate the present through the destruction of the past: "This was signally a period, in which a plot was laid to abolish the memory of the things that had been, and to begin the affairs of the human species afresh."<sup>60</sup> In *Life of Chaucer*, Godwin similarly castigated this endeavor to cut the English people loose of

their historical and cultural moorings through the “indiscriminate ruin of hoary and venerable establishments”.<sup>61</sup> It was, he averred, “Henry VIII, the worse than Vandal of our English story, [who] destroyed the habitations and the memorials which belonged to our ancient character, and exerted himself to the best of his power to make us forget we ever had ancestors.”<sup>62</sup> Part of Godwin’s intention in *Life of Chaucer* was to emphasize how a proper historical attitude can enable that capacity for empathetic identification with radically different others which is the essence of social solidarity in the present.<sup>63</sup> For Godwin, then, Burke’s warning that “people will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors”<sup>64</sup> has resonances far beyond the dangers of *de novo* social or political reform. In *Mandeville*, Godwin suggests that without a conscious, respectful and sympathetic acceptance of our respective pasts, there can be no human solidarity in the present. As Paul Westover puts it, “sympathy with the dead underwrites community”.<sup>65</sup> Mandeville’s unequivocal rejection of Catholicism precludes such *communitas*, and is the basis of his misanthropy and, ultimately, his insanity.<sup>66</sup> Mandeville is, after all, mad. Yet he is sane enough continually to adduce his own conditioning as a sufficient cause of his misanthropy<sup>67</sup>, and of his own inability to alter the future trajectory of his life.<sup>68</sup> This bespeaks a certain disingenuousness. Consciousness of the motives which cause us to act is an essential element of Godwinian moral theory as stated in *Political Justice*. Ideally, he insisted, “we should remove ourselves to the furthest distance from the state of mere inanimate machines, acted upon by causes of which they have no understanding.”<sup>69</sup>

This is the true value and function of intellectual liberty: to choose from among the myriad environmental determinants which comprise us. And in his proposal that

maintaining the organic connection which exists between present and past is the surest guide to virtue, justice and social solidarity, Burke reminds us that this “inheritance” is ours to choose or (it is implied) reject.<sup>70</sup> Our ties to the past are, thus, in “the spirit of philosophic analogy”,<sup>71</sup> familial or biological, but are consciously chosen or created by us in this aspect. As Robert Pogue Harrison has demonstrated, superseding our “biocultural ancestry” through the “adoption” of “non-consanguine predecessors” is an existential, authenticating necessity – for individuals and for communities.<sup>72</sup> If we are to act in sane and sociable ways, adverse personal and biocultural histories have to be consciously rejected and replaced by salutary, inclusive collective histories. Burke, who, uneasily at times, combined his personal heritage as an Irish Catholic with his membership of the Church of England, significantly espoused his fundamental religious commitment to “Christianity at large”.<sup>73</sup> Such a commitment is, for Mandeville, impossible. While his exclusivistic and bigoted religiosity and the geographical and social isolation of his upbringing are both determinants and emblems of his misanthropic character<sup>74</sup>, all proceed from a rejection of any broader historical connection to his contemporaries.

The ethical and historical continuity of Anglicanism with Catholicism and the implacable opposition of both to Mandeville’s puritanism is further symbolised in the relative ease with which Clifford converts to Rome. For Mandeville this is an act of unmitigated apostasy and material self-interest, for he believes Clifford to have converted solely in order to inherit the estate of a dying Catholic relation. Consequently, Clifford’s apostasy makes him a slave to his senses, a “poor, senseless, grovelling wretch, who knows nothing but what he sees, and is affected by nothing but what feeds his appetites, or

pampers his vanity!”<sup>75</sup> Unsurprisingly, Mandeville’s denunciation of Clifford’s putative sensuality reveals his immersion in that intensely Platonic and puritanical conception of reality and true religion which Godwin had condemned elsewhere in his revisionist writings.<sup>76</sup>

Religion is the most important of all things, the great point of discrimination that divides the man from the brute. It is our special prerogative, that we can converse with that which we cannot see, and believe in that the existence of which is reported to us by none of our senses. Such is the abstract and exalted nature of man. This it is that constitutes us intellectual, and truly entitles us to the denomination of reasonable beings. All that passes before the senses of the body, is a scenic exhibition...Invisible things are the only realities; invisible things alone are the things that remain.<sup>77</sup>

Yet Mandeville is mistaken both about the crucial value of such sensuality and feeling as a motive for moral action and about the real object of Clifford’s sensuality. For Clifford is not motivated by the prospect of financial gain, but is rather prey to his “compassion” for his relation; and it is after much deliberation that “the consideration of the old man’s peace at last decided him”.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, not only is Clifford’s conversion determined by his “affectionate nature”, but there are good reasons for becoming a Catholic. Clifford’s conversion is not solely an unthinking and impulsive act of benevolence devoid of informed deliberation; for he is also aided in his decision by the *reasonableness* of the Catholic faith as explained to him by a sincere, pious and intelligent priest.<sup>79</sup> Contrary to the conventions of Protestant historiography, then, Catholicism is presented as a legitimate embodiment of “pure Christianity” – logically, morally and historically.



The priest, who resided as chaplain in the family, was a person of great integrity and simplicity of character. He was deeply read in the controversies between the two churches; and what with the superiority of his knowledge of the subject, the strength of his reasonings, the goodness of his heart, and the pure Christianity of his temper, Clifford found himself powerfully beset.<sup>80</sup>

Godwin is not, however, insisting that Puritanism, broadly conceived, is incapable of producing social solidarity any more than he is suggesting that only Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism can effect this outcome. Rather, within the vexed political and religious context of early nineteenth century Britain, he is contending for a new polity rooted in common religious and cultural ground rather than in the seemingly interminable sectarian divisiveness characteristic of the long eighteenth century. At the same time, his foregrounding of an Anglo-Catholic Christianity as the cohering essence of British culture in *Mandeville* was undoubtedly a judicious approach to the Interregnum, given his continued, if undeserved, reputation as an atheistical Jacobin, continued antipathy to Dissent and the generally conservative tone of early nineteenth century political and moral discourse. This is not to suggest that Godwin's decision to target Mandevillian puritanism was in any way insincere or self-serving. Given his enduring conviction that Calvinism had damaged his own intellectual and moral development, it is unsurprising that he should attempt to expose the impact of that ethos on the culture generally. Yet, while Godwin saw the Calvinism in which he had been reared as one deleterious aspect of "puritanism", he also retained a profound commitment to the religious, moral and political ideals of seventeenth century Puritan Independency from which he consciously derived his own position as a specifically

republican and rational Dissenter. Thus, when public antipathy to the Civil War period and puritan republicans began to subside in the 1820s, Godwin felt confident enough to undertake a major analysis of these most closely related of his intellectual forebears.

### III

In splitting the Whigs into Foxite and Burkean factions, the French Revolution and the subsequent Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars did much to ensure Tory government in Britain over the decades of the early nineteenth century. As the Whigs attempted to reassert themselves in the 1820s in the pursuit of Reform and Catholic Emancipation, they found it necessary to rethink the historical underpinnings of their own ideology. The continued opposition of the Crown and Tory Ultras to Emancipation in particular encouraged Whigs to seek a libertarian and reformist heritage less beholden to the monarchical and anti-Catholic traditions of 1689 and more sympathetic to the anti-royalist libertarian precedent of the Commonwealth.<sup>81</sup> Once the paranoiac fear of republican subversion engendered by the Napoleonic wars had subsided with victory over France, there appeared a gradual re-emergence of interest in the Civil War period and the publication of works of a Foxite and republican flavor.<sup>82</sup> In his insightful study of Godwin's *History of the Commonwealth*, John Morrow notes, however, that both Whig and Tory examinations of the Civil War period at this time were limited merely to an "emotional identification [with] or rejection" of the protagonists of the period. Morrow insists that Godwin's revisionist history was exceptional in that it closely scrutinized the republican theory of government proposed by, and the personal characteristics of, the seventeenth century Commonwealthmen.<sup>83</sup> Contrary to prevailing conservative opinion, Godwin declared that the Commonwealthmen were not fanatical, enthusiastic

revolutionaries, but individuals of outstanding perspicacity and integrity.<sup>84</sup> In total contrast to the generally accepted version of events, moreover, Godwin held that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 had established a morally bankrupt culture in which the ideals of, and opportunity for, a truly democratic and virtuous English polity were effectively extinguished.<sup>85</sup> As Morrow delineates so helpfully, Godwin defends the activities of the Commonwealthmen in terms of the high moral imperatives of the republic of virtue they sought to implement and explains the republic's failure in terms of the longevity of monarchical sentiments among the population. My subsequent analysis moves somewhat beyond Morrow's otherwise fulsome exposition of the *History of the Commonwealth* in drawing attention to Godwin's stress on the *religious* determinants and implications of the Interregnum.

For Godwin, the events of the 1640s and 1650s must be viewed as a series of contentions among conflicting interpretations of the Reformation and its implications for religiosity, morality and political life. In the first place, contention existed between Episcopalian royalists and the Puritan Parliamentary majority opposed both to the despotic tendencies of Charles I and the Popish ceremonialism of his Archbishop, William Laud.<sup>86</sup> Godwin remarks how the Laudian Church of England – in contrast to the Puritan faith professed by the majority of the nation at this time – “was not conformable to the spirit in which the Reformation had commenced”. This was reflected in the general motivation and character of its adherents. Anglicanism, he insists, was the creed of those, on the one hand, who “valued religion principally as an instrument of policy”, and others who, while sincere, followed their political masters simply “from the prejudices of education and habit.” For Godwin, the true spirit of the Reformation

existed only where religion functioned as the conscious, animating principle of intellectual and moral existence. Such persons, from the commencement of the Reformation, were, he adds, “almost universally of the puritan party”.<sup>87</sup>

Initially, seventeenth century English Puritans were united in a desire to root out the supposedly corrupt doctrinal and liturgical accretions of Romish and Anglican worship and return to the simplicity, purity and moral fervor of Christ and the Early Church.<sup>88</sup> Yet inevitably, Godwin opines, these Puritans split around 1643 into the “more cautious and unadventuring” Presbyterians who favored a limited monarchy and the “bolder and more adventurous” Independents who pursued a republic. Again, this was fundamentally a religious division between those advocating the primacy of “religious unity on one side, and integrity of conscience on the other.”<sup>89</sup> The Presbyterians desired merely a reformed national church backed by an appropriately puritan and constitutionally-constrained monarch. In particular, they opposed the tendency to heterodoxy and schism which they believed would invariably be produced in the absence of an established ecclesiastical authority.<sup>90</sup> For the truly reformist, republican Puritans, however, religion could never be expressed in conformity or deference to any authority other than individual conscience.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, then, to the “narrow and exclusive system of religion”<sup>92</sup> embraced by the Presbyterians, the Independents saw true religion as a free and conscious acceptance of, and alignment to, a universal and objective moral order which was, Godwin intimates, only incidentally Christian.<sup>93</sup> Unlike those Puritans who saw the reform of religion simply as a return to the sentiments “of Christ and his apostles”, the republicans intuited that the cause of true religion was hampered by the antipathy of Gospel or Early Christianity to independence.

It may be doubted however, whether the humiliation and self-abasement of a primitive Christian, be a better thing than the lofty and soaring and independent spirit of a genuine republican, inspired with a sober confidence in his own resources, and little disposed to think of himself more humbly than the truth would bear him out. Such a man owns no one for his superior that is not above him in virtues and talents; and, even in the presence of such a one, does not forget what is due to his own claims, as a thinking being endowed with the attributes of morality and conscience.<sup>94</sup>

For the Independents, then, the logical consequence of true religiosity was a radically new and advanced form of society in which virtue and solidarity were compatible with, and indeed, depended upon, moral and intellectual autonomy. Yet although the majority of English people favored Puritanism, conceived as an anti-Romish reform of the national church, most did not accept the republican logic which proposed the evolution of religiosity into a new secular political ethic.<sup>95</sup> In *Life of Chaucer*, Godwin described how the Commonwealthmen's radical and "puritan" forebear, John Wycliffe, was similarly intent upon inculcating a new, progressive moral and intellectual character with which the majority of his contemporaries were unsympathetic.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, like the seventeenth century republicans, Wycliffe believed himself to be allied to the cause of truth and progress, and consequently acting in accordance with a moral imperative demanding its expression.<sup>97</sup> Yet both sets of puritans failed in their efforts to advance an evolved religiosity through an inadequate understanding of the fact that human beings are fundamentally sensual and emotional, rather than intellectual, creatures who are motivated, for the most part, by habit, custom and tradition rather than by reason.<sup>98</sup>

From as early as 1653 the republicans were effectively excluded from influence in the events of the time, and Godwin's attention consequently shifts to the puissance, longevity and *positive* moral force of royalist conservatism. If Godwin's Commonwealthmen were convinced that their grasp of religion's essence necessitated a republican future, their opponents rejected republicanism with an equally passionate assertion of the sanctity of tradition.

[They]...were thoroughly persuaded that there was a sacred right, a right of prescription and indefeasibleness belonging to the preceding government, which it was the highest virtue in them at all times to assert, and to seek to restore. They clung to it, not for its abstract fitness and beauty, but because it had descended to them from their ancestors, and because it was English. It was difficult to contend with such men, and all but impossible to suppress them.<sup>99</sup>

In her study of *Lives of Milton's Nephews*, Tillotama Rajan has argued that, in his biographical, fictional and historical expositions of the mid-seventeenth century, Godwin displays a consistent refusal to directly address the issue of puritan republicanism, believing that this was "a period whose potential can be grasped only obliquely and through a negative dialectic."<sup>100</sup> While Rajan says little about *Mandeville* and the *History of the Commonwealth*, there is much to commend her generalization. For she also reminds us that Godwin made a stark distinction between the "moral" of a literary work and its "tendency". While the former denotes the intended lesson which might be abstracted from the text, the latter designates the "actual effect" of the work on the reader, an effect of which authors are themselves frequently ignorant and which "cannot be completely ascertained but by the experiment".<sup>101</sup> Godwin's avowed intention in the

*History of the Commonwealth* was to celebrate the moral and intellectual genius of the republicans; yet the overwhelming impression or lesson imparted – the “tendency” of the work, perhaps – is that radical change, however enlightened and far-sighted it might be, is seldom a match for the inveterate conservatism of the mass of humankind.

Government is founded in opinion: and the sentiments and prejudices of a greater or smaller portion of its subjects form its basis...In the second place, opinion depends very much on prescription. So much as our forefathers believed, the creed, religious or political, which they handed down to us, we are inclined to entertain.<sup>102</sup>

The foundation of government in public opinion was a central tenet of *Political Justice* and substantively informed Godwin’s underappreciated insistence on the immorality and impracticality of revolutionary political change.<sup>103</sup> While his later writings are more likely to identify prescription, rather than reason, as the basis of opinion, Godwin remains dubious about the ethics of forcible political change. In *History of the Commonwealth*, he continually downplays the *revolutionary* nature of the republicans’ activity, insisting that, in exceeding his prerogative, the King had created a revolutionary situation which the republicans then inherited and attempted to manage according to their more evolved political lights.<sup>104</sup> In stressing the moderation, integrity and public spirit of the seventeenth century Puritan republicans, Godwin provides mainstream Britain with a timely reminder that Protestant Nonconformity cannot uniformly be categorized as unpatriotic and revolutionary. At the same time, the failure of the Puritan experiment also offers a practical lesson for would be reformers of the early nineteenth century: “...the English intellect and moral feeling were probably not sufficiently ripe for a

republican government: it may be, that a republican government would at no time be a desirable acquisition for the people of this country.”<sup>105</sup>

#### IV

The seventeenth century English republic proved a bold but doomed experiment in forming a polity based on moral and intellectual independence. This attempt to marry independence and sociability was a central (though often overlooked) objective of *Political Justice*, as Godwin asserted in that work’s first paragraph.<sup>106</sup> Godwin’s failure to achieve this objective in his *magnum opus* owed much to his assumption of an immaterialist, emotionally and socially disengaged, “puritan” conception of human nature.<sup>107</sup> The character of Mandeville leaves the reader in no doubt as to Godwin’s assessment of the epistemological and moral shortcomings of this puritan essentialism. If the Commonwealthmen’s more evolved puritanism – in essence, a post-religious republicanism – proved an ideal beyond the capacity (and taste) of contemporary humanity, then Mandeville’s emotionally arid and sensually detached Calvinism is rather more roundly and unequivocally condemned for its irremediable asociality. Yet, Mandeville’s misanthropy derives not only from his specifically puritan epistemology, but more importantly, perhaps, from the fundamentally xenophobic construction of his Protestant identity. In this, he may be regarded as caricaturing the eighteenth century Protestant British national identity described so lucidly by Linda Colley.<sup>108</sup> Given the current state of “English intellect and moral feeling”, unevolved, perhaps, from the seventeenth century, the best solution to Godwin’s central political dilemma appears to be the Anglo-Catholic ideal expressed in *Mandeville*. Such a Burkean commitment to Christianity in general underlines Godwin’s continued sensitivity to the ever-apparent



and damaging sectarianism of British life in the decades prior to Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. It also lends credence to Michael Scrivener's recent assertion that a cosmopolitan ideal characteristic of the Enlightenment persisted throughout a period generally considered to have been overwhelmingly populated with Romantic nationalisms.<sup>109</sup> Most significantly, perhaps, it prefigures Godwin's later, intriguing assessment that religious sentiment was essential to the reconciliation of personal independence and social solidarity.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, And Its Influence On Morals and Happiness*, edited by F.E.L.Priestley, 3 vols (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1946). Hereafter referred to as *Political Justice*.

<sup>2</sup> P. P. Howe ed., *Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, vol. 11 (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), 17.

<sup>3</sup> See Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1986); and Martin Fitzpatrick, "William Godwin and the Rational Dissenters", *Price-Priestley Newsletter* 3 (1979): 4-28. Other scholarship focussing on the Dissenting influence in Godwin's work includes William Stafford, "Dissenting religion translated into politics: Godwin's *Political Justice*", *History of Political Thought*, 1 (1980): 279-99; Peter Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984), 7-55; and R. Bellamy, "Godwin and the Development of the 'New Man of Feeling'", *History of Political Thought* 6 (1985): 411-32.

<sup>4</sup> See Rowland Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper': Godwin's Critique of Enlightened Modernity", *Studies in Romanticism*, 41 (2002): 445-70; Rowland Weston, "History, Memory, and Moral Knowledge: William Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809)", *The European Legacy* 14 (2009): 651-65.

<sup>5</sup> Pamela Clemit, ed., *Lives of the Great Romantics III: Godwin, Wollstonecraft & Mary Shelley by their Contemporaries, Volume 1: Godwin* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), xviii-xxiv. The vast majority of Godwin scholarship deals with his output in the 1790s.

---

<sup>6</sup> J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> William Godwin, *Lives of Edward and John Philips, Nephews and Pupils of Milton. Including Various Particulars of the Literary and Political History of Their Times* (London, 1815), (hereafter referred to as *Lives of Milton's Nephews*). The *Edinburgh Review* perceived elements of the work as having the appearance of "an intended history of England". See Donald Reiman, ed., *The Romantics Reviewed*, C 1 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), 371. William Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth of England. From its Commencement, to the Restoration of Charles the Second*, 4 vols (New Burlington Street, 1824-28). (Hereafter referred to as *History of the Commonwealth*).

<sup>8</sup> Godwin's reading over the ensuing decade and a half reveals a continuing interest in the culture of seventeenth-century England. For Godwin's reading, writing and social habits see his Diary. This work is currently being digitised. I consulted the microfilm copy held by Duke University. Godwin also set one of his dramatic works in the Civil War period. See *Faulkner: A Tragedy* (Blackfriars, 1807), a bloodthirsty and intellectually unstimulating play in which the protagonist is orphaned by his father's death at the Battle of Worcester (1651).

<sup>9</sup> Pamela Clemit, ed., *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, 8 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992), vol. 6. (Hereafter referred to as *Mandeville*).

<sup>10</sup> William Godwin, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1965), 291.

<sup>11</sup> John Kenyon, *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England Since the Renaissance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1993), 59.

<sup>12</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 219.

<sup>13</sup> See Clark, *English Society*.

<sup>14</sup> See Frank M. Turner, "British Politics and the Demise of the Roman Republic: 1700-1939", *The Historical Journal* 29 (1986): 587-88. The extensiveness and longevity of the Burkean challenge to Dissent is aptly illustrated in Bogue and Bennett's *History of Dissenters*, a rearguard attempt to bolster and restore the reputation of English Nonconformity through a demonstration of its promotion of "True Religion", its contribution to "Sacred Literature", and its influence on "Public Morals", "National Prosperity"

---

and "Civil and Religious Liberty". See David Bogue & James Bennett, *History of Dissenters, from the Revolution in 1688, to the year 1808*, 4 vols (London, 1808-1812). See 4: 496-512. The authors note that Burke's *Reflections* "proved the source of discord, and spread strife and contention among the people of Great Britain, who were before living in harmony and peace." Bogue & Bennett, *History of Dissenters*, 4:195.

<sup>15</sup> C. C. O'Brien, "Introduction" to Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 22-41.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Mori, *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 64-65.

<sup>17</sup> Howe, ed., *Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 7: 235-42.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, 82.

<sup>19</sup> Godwin, *Political Justice*, 2: 119.

<sup>20</sup> Weston, "History, Memory, and Moral Knowledge": 654-55.

<sup>21</sup> Godwin, *Political Justice*, 2: 329-30.

<sup>22</sup> Godwin, *Political Justice*, 1: 285-97; 2: 501.

<sup>23</sup> Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'": 446-48.

<sup>24</sup> See Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice*.

<sup>25</sup> Godwin, note of March 10, 1800 in Mark Philp, ed., *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, 1: 52-54.

<sup>26</sup> William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Pamela Clemit points out how revisions made to the novel's 3rd edition of 1797 illustrate Godwin's decreasing emphasis on rational autonomy and his increasing appreciation of the value of sympathy and community. See *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 67-68. See also Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'": 456-59.

<sup>27</sup> G. D. Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 203ff.

<sup>28</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel*, 53-56, 203-20. Also see Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 83.

---

<sup>30</sup> Clemmit has noted that while Caleb's quest for knowledge reflects a traditionally Christian and especially Protestant spiritual odyssey, it is one significantly devoid of the usual Christian dénouement – reconciliation with God or spiritual enlightenment. See *The Godwinian Novel*, 55. Maurice Hindle contends that Godwin intends the reader to be as "repelled" by Caleb's unremitting inquisitiveness as they are by the despotism of his persecutor and former employer Squire Falkland. See "Introduction" to *Caleb Williams* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), xxxv. A number of scholars have drawn attention to the moral equivocality of Caleb's curiosity. Rather than being a dispassionate quest for truth and justice, there are good reasons for regarding Caleb's activity as careless, naive, egoistical and based in a desire for power. See Gay Clifford, "Caleb Williams and *Frankenstein*: First-Person Narratives and "Things as They Are"", *Genrex* (1977): 602-604; R. F. Storch, "Metaphors of Private Guilt and Social Rebellion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*", *English Literary History* 34 (1967): 196; G. Barker, "Justice to Caleb Williams", *Studies in the Novel* 6 (1974): 378-79; Gary Handwerk, "Of Caleb's Guilt and Godwin's Truth: Ideology and Ethics in *Caleb Williams*", *English Literary History*, 60 (1993): 953-54.

<sup>31</sup> See Rexford Stamper, "Caleb Williams: The Bondage of Truth", *Southern Quarterly* 12 (1972): 39-50.

<sup>32</sup> Godwin, unpublished *Prospectus of a History of the Protestant Reformation in England*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, [Abinger] Dep. b. 226/5. This is dated September 22, 1832. "If any man therefore is satisfied that freedom of thought & of speech, & a free press, are insignificant advantages, he may consistently be an enemy to the Protestant Reformation, for to the Protestant Reformation we are unquestionably indebted for these." Other examples abound in Godwin's *oeuvre*, for example, Theophilus Marcliffe [this was one of Godwin's pseudonyms], *Life of Lady Jane Grey* (London, 1806), 111-12.

<sup>33</sup> William Godwin, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the early English poet: including memoirs of his friend and kinsman, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster: with sketches of the manners, opinions, arts and literature of England in the Fourteenth Century*, 4 vols (New York: AMS Press, 1974). (Hereafter referred to as *Life of Chaucer*).

<sup>34</sup> Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'".

---

<sup>35</sup> This is dealt with in the major biographical works, for example, William St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), 189-209. B. Sprague Allen's "The Reaction Against William Godwin", *Modern Philology* 16 (1918): 57-75 also remains a useful starting point in this regard.

<sup>36</sup> *The European Magazine and London Review* maintained that ultimately Godwin's *Life of Chaucer* "will convey his name safe into the harbour of immortality, when, on account of the rottenness of the materials with which they were constructed, his Novels and Political Justice shall have perished in the Gulf of Oblivion." See April (1806): 260.

<sup>37</sup> In a letter to John Rickman, dated June 27, 1808, Godwin noted how "...considering the numerousness of the class to which my name is obnoxious, I annexed the fictitious name of Baldwin". Oxford, Bodleian Library, [Abinger] Dep. c. 663/4. Godwin also published his children's books under the pseudonyms William Scolfield and Theophilus Marcliffe. For an informative and engaging discussion of Godwin's publications for children, see William St. Clair, "William Godwin as Children's Bookseller", in Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, eds., *Children and their Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 165-179.

<sup>38</sup> See, "Preface" to *Mandeville*, 8. Later, in a letter to Mary Shelley (March 30, 1820), Godwin remarked how both works written during this period without an eye to public sales (*Lives of Milton's Nephews* and *Essay on Sepulchres*) "...were not me", being written at a time – between the publication of *Fleetwood* (1805) and commencing work on *Mandeville* in 1816 – in which he was mentally exhausted. He also noted that since 1816, he has felt a new lease of intellectual life and claims, "I shall never leave off writing again." In C. Kegan Paul, ed., *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1876), 2: 270-71. The fascinating *Essay on Sepulchres* has recently attracted a deal of attention. See Julie A. Carlson, *England's First Family of Writers* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Paul Westover, "William Godwin, Literary Tourism, and the Work of Necromanticism", *Studies in Romanticism* 48 (2009): 299-319; Weston, "History, Memory, and Moral Knowledge".

<sup>39</sup> Godwin, *Lives of Milton's Nephews*, v-vi. Godwin's Diary reveals that he continued to regularly read Milton until the end of his life.

---

<sup>40</sup> Godwin, *Lives of Milton's Nephews*, v,18, 28.

<sup>41</sup> Dwight A. Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 36-38.

<sup>42</sup> In his determination to prove the Roman Catholic Church the antichrist, Bradford came very close to insanity: "We were at one time not without some apprehension, that, by the severity of this inquiry, his wits would have been unsettled, and that he would have been rendered a qualified candidate for the cells of Bedlam." Godwin, *Mandeville*, 51-52.

<sup>43</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 83.

<sup>44</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 112-22.

<sup>45</sup> Clemit points out that Godwin probably planned the novel as a four volume work. See "Introduction" to *Mandeville*, v. Godwin claims that he envisaged a three volume novel commencing with the "Irish Rebellion" and culminating "in the plot of Titus Oates". Yet, having found that he could not complete the projected work in three volumes, he published anyway. Oxford, Bodleian Library, [Abinger ] Dep. b. 229/3.

<sup>46</sup> B. J. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist* (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 132-33.

<sup>47</sup> Godwin, *Political Justice* (the quoted phrase is the title of Book 1, Chapter 4).

<sup>48</sup> Godwin, *St Leon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 397-98.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Balfour Elder, "Godwin and 'The Great Springs of Human Passion'", *Ariel* 14 (1983): 28.

Marion Omar Farouk also maintains that Godwin's purpose is to display the way in which character is formed entirely from the social and intellectual conditions obtaining in a particular historical milieu. See "Mandeville, A Tale of the Seventeenth Century – Historical Novel or Psychological Study?" in Erika Lingner, ed., *Essays in Honour of William Gallacher*, (Berlin: Humboldt University, 1966), 111-17. In common with many historical novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, *Mandeville* is, among other things, a microhistorical exploration of the manners and mentalities of a discrete moment in time. See Karen O'Brien, "History and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68 (2005): 397-413.

<sup>50</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 44-45.

<sup>51</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 94-95.

<sup>52</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 155.

---

<sup>53</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 76.

<sup>54</sup> John Middleton Murray was perhaps the first to draw attention to links between Puritan millennialism and Godwin's utopia, noting that "the vision we glimpse through *The Principles of Political Justice* [sic] is perhaps as near as a modern mind can get to what a seventeenth century Independent imagined by the rule of the Saints." See *Heaven- and Earth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), 256.

<sup>55</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 72-73.

<sup>56</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 23-24.

<sup>57</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 75.

<sup>58</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 75-76.

<sup>59</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 75.

<sup>60</sup> William Godwin, *Essay on Sepulchres*, in Mark Philp ed., *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1993), 6: 16.

<sup>61</sup> Godwin, *Life of Chaucer*, 3: 56-57.

<sup>62</sup> Godwin, *Life of Chaucer*, 1: 73.

<sup>63</sup> Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'": 463-70.

<sup>64</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 119.

<sup>65</sup> Westover, "William Godwin, Literary Tourism, and the Work of Necromanticism": 315.

<sup>66</sup> Thus Gary Handwerk is right to point out that Mandeville's conditioning, his "sense of absolute subjection to [his personal] history leads inevitably to insanity." As Handwerk insists, Mandeville's insane misanthropy is not "pure irrationality, but...a paranoia normalized and justified by its ideological encoding with contemporary Presbyterianism." See "History, trauma, and the limits of the liberal imagination: William Godwin's historical fiction", in Tillotama Rajan and Julia M. Wright, eds, *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming Literature 1789-1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 75-76.

<sup>67</sup> Mandeville himself is an unrepentant determinist: "It is the express purpose of the narrative in which I am engaged, to show how the concurrence of a variety of causes operate to form a character...". Godwin, *Mandeville*, 79.

---

<sup>68</sup> Mandeville utilizes hyper-Calvinist notions of predestination in analyzing his doomed relationship with Clifford. See Handwerk, "Historical Trauma", 87.

<sup>69</sup> Godwin, *Political Justice*, 1: 68.

<sup>70</sup> "In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars." Burke, *Reflections*, 120. For a thoughtful and stimulating elaboration of Burke's "stress on human volition" see David Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 43-59.

<sup>71</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 120.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 90-105.

<sup>73</sup> O'Brien, "Introduction", 29-30.

<sup>74</sup> Mandeville, 23ff, 80-82.

<sup>75</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 224ff.

<sup>76</sup> See Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'", 449-56.

<sup>77</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 225.

<sup>78</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 228-29.

<sup>79</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 229.

<sup>80</sup> Godwin, *Mandeville*, 229.

<sup>81</sup> See Owen Dudley Edwards, *Macaulay* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), 11-12.

<sup>82</sup> R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution* (London: Methuen & Co., 1977), 52-57.

<sup>83</sup> It was Godwin's intention, Morrow correctly asserts, to provide an inspiring and instructive model of political and moral excellence. John Morrow, "Republicanism and Public Virtue: William Godwin's *History of the Commonwealth of England*", *The Historical Journal* 34 (1991): 647-48, 659-64. See Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: 5-6; 3: 189.



---

<sup>84</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 2: 77.

<sup>85</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: 6; 3: 108, 485-97.

<sup>86</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: 41-42.

<sup>87</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: 149-51, 333-34, 418.

<sup>88</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: 302.

<sup>89</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: 4-5, 354-56, 393; 2: 336.

<sup>90</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 2: 335-36.

<sup>91</sup> "They exercised their understandings; each man was a thinking and reflecting being; they valued their independence; and above all, they were animated with a fervent spirit of religion". Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 2: 294. See also 2:149-51.

<sup>92</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 2: 175.

<sup>93</sup> "A sense of religion was scarcely ever so deeply engraved upon the people of any age or country, as upon the men of the victorious party, by whom monarchy was extinguished in England in the middle of the seventeenth century. Happy is he who can unite the loftiness of an erect and independent spirit, to a conscious intercourse with, and an undoubting reliance on the protection of, the Author of the Universe. Religion is then chiefly an evil, when it inspires men with a selfish, an exclusive, and a pusillanimous frame of thinking. The republicans of this period regarded themselves as fighting in the power of the Lord. It was not they who won the field; but the Lord who gave them the victory. They sought not themselves; they sought the kingdom of Christ, or in other words, as they understood it, the kingdom of genuine piety and true virtue." Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 3: 443-44.

<sup>94</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 4: 104-5.

<sup>95</sup> "The people of England at this day understood, or thought they understood, the worth of an unornamented, pure and fervent religion, and its preferableness to the hierarchy patronised by Henry and Elizabeth; but they were very imperfect judges of the value of uncorrupt political institutions, and the advantages that are afforded by civil equality." Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 2: 339.

<sup>96</sup> Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'": 449-56.

<sup>97</sup> Godwin, *Life of Chaucer*, 3: 302-3.

---

<sup>98</sup> For Wycliffe, see Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'": 451-53.

<sup>99</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 4, 170.

<sup>100</sup> Tillotama Rajan, "Uncertain Futures: History and Genealogy in William Godwin's *The Lives of Edward and John Philips, Nephews and Pupils of Milton*", *Milton Quarterly* 32 (1998): 76-77.

<sup>101</sup> Godwin, *The Enquirer*, 129-46.

<sup>102</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 3: 515. See also Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'": 451-55.

<sup>103</sup> Godwin, *Political Justice*, 1:104-7, 145, 242-56.

<sup>104</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: ix, 18-19, 135, 304; 2: 196, 688-89.

<sup>105</sup> Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth*, 1: 6.

<sup>106</sup> Godwin, *Political Justice*, 1: 1-2. Eric Daffron has drawn attention to this aspect of *Political Justice* in his analysis of Godwin's treatment of the problematic relationship between sympathy and individuality in *Caleb Williams*. See "'Magnetical Sympathy': strategies of power and resistance in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*", *Criticism* 37 (1995): 213-32. William Stafford identifies the centrality of this issue to *Political Justice* without elaborating on it. See *Socialism, Radicalism and Nostalgia: Social Criticism in Britain, 1775-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 139. George Crowder briefly notes Godwin's Rousseauist concern with the proper reconciliation of humanity's social nature with the fundamental need for moral self-direction. See *Classical Anarchism: the political thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 65-69.

<sup>107</sup> Weston, "Politics, Passion and the 'Puritan Temper'".

<sup>108</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Random House, 1996), 10-58.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Scrivener, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in the Age of Revolution and Reaction, 1776-1832* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007).

<sup>110</sup> Rowland Weston, 'William Godwin's Religious Sense', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32 (2009): 420. It should be noted that in his posthumously published writings Godwin stresses that this religious sentiment need not be Christian.