Nineteenth-Century Major Lives and Letters

Series Editor: Marilyn Gaull

This series presents original biographical, critical, and scholarly studies of literary works and public figures in Great Britain, North America, and continental Europe during the nineteenth century. The volumes in Nineteenth-Century Major Lives and Letters evoke the energies, achievements, contributions, cultural traditions, and individuals who reflected and generated them during the Romantic and Victorian period. The topics are: critical, textual, and historical scholarship; literary and book history; biography; cultural and comparative studies; critical theory, art, architecture, science, politics, religion, music, language, philosophy, aesthetics, law, publication, translation, domestic and public life; popular culture; and anything that influenced, impinges upon, expresses, or contributes to an understanding of the authors, works, and events of the nineteenth century.

The authors consist of political figures, artists, scientists, and cultural icons including William Blake, Thomas Hardy, Charles Darwin, William Wordsworth, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and their contemporaries.

The series editor is Marilyn Gaull, PhD (Indiana University), FEA. She has taught at William and Mary, Temple University, New York University, and is research professor at the Editorial Institute at Boston University. She is the founder and editor of The Wordsworth Circle and the author of English Romanticism: The Human Context, and editions, essays, and reviews in journals. She lectures internationally on British Romanticism, folklore, and narrative theory, intellectual history, publishing procedures, and history of science.

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Stuart Andrews
To the memory of John McKeown, who introduced me to the Friends of Coleridge and so to Southey
A Dialogue between Poet and Friend

POET
Milner made up of impudence and trick,
With cloven tongue prepared to hiss and lick,
Rome’s Brazen Serpent—boldly dares discuss
The roasting of thy heart, O brave John Huss!
And with grim triumph and a truculent glee
Absolves anew the Pope-wrought perfidy,
That made an empire’s plighted faith a lie,
And fix’d a broad stare on the Devil’s eye—
(Pleas’d with the guilt, yet-envy-stung at heart
To stand outmaster’d in his own black art!)
Yet Milner . . .

FRIEND
Enough of Milner! We’re agreed
Who now defends would then have done the deed.
But who not feels persuasion’s gentle sway,
Who but must meet the proffered hand half way
When courteous Butler . . .

POET (aside) Rome’s smooth go-between!

FRIEND
Laments the advice that soured a milky queen—
(For ‘bloody’ all enlightened men confess
An antiquated error of the press:)
Who rapt by zeal beyond her sex’s bounds,
With actual cautery staunched the Church’s wounds!
And tho’ he deems, that with too broad a blur
We damn the French and Irish massacre,
Yet blames them both—and thinks the Pope might err!
What think you now? Boots it with spear and shield
Against such gentle foes to take the field? . . .

Extract from Coleridge’s “Sancti Dominici Pallium” [1826?]
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This book is about Southey the poet laureate, rather than Southey the poet. Born at Bristol in 1774, Robert Southey married a Bristol girl and is commemorated by a portrait bust in Bristol Cathedral. Yet he lived for 40 years in the Lake District. The youngest of the Lake Poets, Southey held the laureateship for 30 years before Wordsworth succeeded him. In 1817 a spiteful journalist described Southey as “a gentleman of credit and renown, and, until he became Poet Laureate, a Poet.” Southey himself told Walter Savage Landor: “I have an ominous feeling that there are poets enough in the world without me, and that my best chance of being remembered will be as an historian.” That was in 1810, when the first volume of his three-volume History of Brazil appeared and three years before he became poet laureate.

Southey’s interest in Portugal and her South American territories was kindled when his clergyman uncle took him to spend the winter of 1795–6 in Lisbon. The Rev. Herbert Hill had intended his nephew for the Anglican ministry, but in the mid-1790s Southey shared with his brother-in-law, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the radical politics, Unitarian theology, and fashionable utopian faith in the infant United States of America that made both the young poets sympathetic to the French Revolution. The trip to Lisbon finally extricated Southey from the Pantisocratic scheme (which he and Coleridge had hatched together) of building a model community in Pennsylvania.

Those months in Lisbon exposed Southey to Catholicism in all its Portuguese and Spanish extravagance. The experience was undoubtedly formative, as he later acknowledged. His first gut-reaction to Catholicism—before the Irish Rebellion and the Irish Act of Union revived the hostility of the English ruling classes toward “Popery”—was reinforced by a second visit to Lisbon in 1800–1. From his earliest account (1797) of his first visit to Spain and Portugal (and its republication in 1808), through his History of Brazil (1810–19) and the opening pages of his Peninsular War (1823), through five Quarterly Review articles (1811, 1819, 1825, 1826, and 1828), to the
Colloquies 1829 and the anonymous Doctor (1834–8), he castigates global Catholicism. In tracing the consistency and growing coherence of Southey’s campaign against the presumed political threat posed by Catholicism, this study illustrates the rhetorical richness of his polemical prose at a time when his main poetic achievement was behind him.

Southey denied that his Book of the Church (1824) was intended as a contribution to the Catholic Emancipation debate—though as early as 1807 he told his former school-friend, Charles Wynn, that he favored the removal of religious tests “with regard to every other sect—Jews and all—but not to the Catholics.” His reason was that “they will not tolerate: the proof is in their practice all over Catholic Europe, and it is in the nature of their principles now.” Southey already believed that the British constitution was under a double threat: from reformers seeking to change the social complexion of the House of Commons by extending the electoral franchise, and from so-called Emancipationists campaigning for Catholics to be allowed to sit in Parliament. Inevitably, his published accounts of his personal encounters with Catholicism, and his more concerted polemical attacks on the Catholic Church, entangled him in the Emancipation debate, and won him plaudits from the bench of bishops.

Southey’s historical perspective convinced him that there would be no change in the attitudes and teaching of the Catholic hierarchy until “the Ethiopian changes his skin, and the leopard her spots.” So, like the most extreme Protestant propagandists of the day, Southey traced papal policy back to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215—summoned to suppress the Albigensian heretics of Languedoc. He claimed that the Council’s decrees showed how the Catholic Church behaved when it was able to deploy its persecuting power. The coincidence that 1215 is also the date of the Magna Carta does nothing to blunt the force of Southey’s rhetoric. Even Coleridge, who had also disliked what he saw of Mediterranean Catholicism in Malta, Sicily, and Italy, hints in his late poem, “Sancti Pallium Dominici: a Dialogue between Poet and Friend,” that the poet laureate’s vehemence had overreached itself. Coleridge’s verses feature Southey’s two main Catholic antagonists: the lawyer, Charles Butler (“Rome’s smooth go-between”), and Bishop John Milner (“Rome’s brazen serpent”), whose End of Religious Controversy (1818) reached a fifth edition in 1824 when Southey’s Book of the Church appeared.

Southey’s demonization of the Dominican order is a thread that not only links the History of Brazil with the Book of the Church, but also runs through three of his review articles in the Quarterly Review.
For Southey, Dominic was “the only saint in whom no solitary speck of goodness can be discovered.” Yet the poet laureate was no mean historian, and was approached about filling the chair of history at Durham University. His *History of Brazil*, though monumental and overdetailed, is balanced in its verdict on the Jesuit missionaries; his *Life of Wesley and the rise and progress of Methodism* (1820), though disliked by Methodists at the time, now seems almost to achieve the “perfect fairness” that Southey claimed. And Sir Henry Newbolt could still call Southey’s biography of Nelson (1813) “the best life of Nelson,” more than a century later. By contrast, Southey’s treatment of Catholicism is propagandist, sometimes unhistorical and always impassioned. Yet, although expressed in anti-Catholic rhetoric, Southey’s main concern was to defend the moral and social benefits of the Established Church—irrespective of Unitarian or Trinitarian theology. Coleridge had begun to think, even before he went to Malta, that there might be something to be said for an established church. In *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1830), Coleridge made his own contribution by attempting to define a “national” church, as opposed to the invisible worldwide church of Christ. And, if we can believe Wordsworth, the eldest of the Lake Poets, he himself wrote his *Ecclesiastical Sketches* without realizing that Southey was simultaneously working on his *Book of the Church*. The parallelism is striking.

So the final chapter focuses on the Lake Poets’ defense of the Anglican Church as a social institution, and—in the decades before Forster’s Education Act—the only widespread provider of primary education. Twentieth-century critics were embarrassed by Southey’s religious preoccupations and by his defense of Anglicanism, looking back as they did from a century when most of the external markers of Anglicanism’s establishment status had been removed, when an ecumenical spirit led to the founding of the World Council of Churches, and when the European Declaration Rights guaranteed workers the “right” to holidays with pay. More recent scholarship has recognized that Southey’s seeming religious paranoia has both a literary and a historical importance. The terror-torn twenty-first century is perhaps better able to sympathize with Southey’s fears about the erosion of national identity. Just as in Southey’s day, there is again in England the prospect of an *imperium in imperio* as *sharia* law threatens to challenge customary and statute law. Our fears may be as exaggerated as Southey’s, but the analogy may help us to understand Southey.

Like David Craig’s recent examination of Southey’s alleged apostasy, my study challenges the easy assumption that support for the
Established Church damns its advocates as High Tories. It was admittedly Peel, a Conservative prime minister (though hardly a typical Tory), who offered Southey a baronetcy and gave him an additional pension. But Southey’s concern for the poor of the industrial towns, and of rural Ireland, was genuine enough, as was his justified conviction that giving parliamentary seats to Catholics or the electoral franchise to the middle classes was unlikely to improve the condition of the lower classes, whether English or Irish. And it was his first published collection of poems in 1797, depicting the lower orders as casualties of war, that drew the fire of the weekly *Antijacobin*. As Craig mildly remarks, “It should now be clear that Southey’s conservatism seems more unusual than some commentators have suggested, and that his intellectual development was more complex than his opponents implied.”

Southey claimed in 1812 that he could never have subscribed to the 39 Articles, but he championed the constitutionally established Anglican Church as the only buttress against what he saw as the social deprivation and degenerating public morality of the age. The 1800 Act of Union with Ireland, which abolished the Irish Parliament, transformed the question of Catholic representation in the House of Commons from a Dublin problem into a Westminster one. Coleridge’s hope that Catholic Emancipation might bring tranquillity to Ireland was not fulfilled, and one of Gladstone’s first acts as prime minister was to disestablish the Irish part of the Anglican Church. Despite Southey’s hostility to the institutions of medieval monasticism, he was willing to contemplate the establishment of “Protestant nunneries” for widows and single women left unsupported and unregarded by the Napoleonic Wars. He placed his faith in education—provided it was under Anglican control—and the idea of his *Book of the Church* began as a school textbook. Southey’s was indeed a compassionate conservatism.
I have been helped by two recent publications: W. A. Speck’s Robert Southey: entire man of letters (Yale 2006)—described by Lynda Pratt as “clearly the best biography of Southey ever written”—and David Craig’s Robert Southey and Romantic Apostasy: political argument in Britain, 1780–1840 (Royal Historical Society 2007). I am pleased to endorse Craig’s challenge to conventional critiques of the Lake Poets’ so-called apostasy. Sheridan Gilley’s 1982 article on Southey and national identity in Studies in Church History 18, like Craig’s chapter on Southey’s defense of church and state, succinctly places the Book of the Church in its contemporary context.

My debt to other scholars is made clear in the text, though I must here mention Jeffrey Barbeau, who pointed me to Coleridge’s comment on the Life of Wesley. And I must record my particular thanks to two other Southey scholars. Lynda Pratt of Nottingham University, who has played a major role in the rehabilitation of Southey, and has put us all in her debt through the panel of contributors she assembled for her collection of essays, Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism (2006), and through her editing of the online edition of the Collected Letters. But I owe her a personal debt for the encouragement and advice she gave me when this book was at an early stage. And I owe an even greater personal debt to Tim Fulford of Nottingham Trent University, one of Lynda’s fellow-editors of the Collected Letters. He not only introduced me to previously unpublished letters, but heroically read most of my manuscript and made valuable suggestions for sharpening its focus. Any flaws that remain are probably instances of failure to follow his advice.

Closer to home, I record particular thanks to the warden and scholars of Winchester College for giving me access to the letters of warden George Isaac Huntingford’s, and to Bristol Reference Library for permission to use the Bristol street scene for the cover design. It was in Bristol Reference Library (where the Boult bequest contains volumes from Southey’s private library) that a hitherto unpublished letter dated January 1826, and in the unmistakable hand of warden
Huntingford, fell from a copy of the *Book of the Church*. The letter (post-marked January 22, 1826 and addressed to “Robert Southey, Esq‘, Keswick, Cumberland”) is published for the first time in my final chapter. For that happy chance and for long years of patient assistance, I am pleased to record my gratitude to the staff and resources of the Bristol Reference Library. And also for the forbearance of my wife during two decades of “retirement.”
Robert Southey: Life and Times

1774 Born in Bristol.
1788 Enters Westminster School.
1789 Begins prose version of *Madoc*. Storming of the Bastille.
1793 Leaves Westminster for Balliol College, Oxford. Britain declares war on France.
1794 Begins verse version of *Madoc*. Meets Coleridge who is passing through Oxford: together they write the *Fall of Robespierre* and make plans for their model settlement (Pantisocracy) in Pennsylvania.
1795 Pantisocracy abandoned. Southey’s uncle takes him to Lisbon.
1796 Returns from Lisbon.
1797 *Letters from Spain and Portugal* and Bristol edition of *Poems*.
1800 Second Lisbon visit. Irish Act of Union: doubts over coronation oath.
1801 Back from Lisbon. To Dublin as Irish chancellor of the exchequer’s secretary. Pitt resigns as prime minister. *Thalaba the Destroyer* published.
1802 Southey family moves to Keswick. Peace of Amiens. Papal concordat with Bonaparte’s France.
1803 Begins writing for *Annual Review*. Milner appointed vicar apostolic.
1804 Coleridge in Malta. War resumes. Pitt returns as prime minister.
1806 Grenville ministry. Deaths of Pitt and Fox.


1812  Prime minister Perceval assassinated. Napoleon invades Russia.


1814  *Roderick, the last of the Goths*. Jesuit Order restored.

1815  Battle of Waterloo ends Napoleonic Wars.

1816  *The Poet’s Pilgrimage to Waterloo*. Spa Fields Riot.

1817  *Wat Tyler, Letter to William Smith*, 2nd volume of *History of Brazil*.


1820  *Life of Wesley*. Death of George III. Prince Regent now George IV.

1821  Poet Laureate’s *A Vision of Judgment*.

1822  Wordsworth writes *Ecclesiastical Sketches*.

1823  First volume of *History of the Peninsular War* published.

1824  *Book of the Church*. Milner’s *Strictures on the Poet Laureate*.

1825  “History of the Vaudois” in *Quarterly Review*. Canning’s Catholic Relief Bill fails.

1826  Disraeli’s *Vivian Grey*. Southey’s *Vindiciæ*. Butler’s *Vindication*.

1827  Canning dies.


1830  Macaulay attacks *Colloquies* in *Edinburgh Review*. Coleridge’s *On the Constitution of the Church and State*. Death of George IV.

1832  Reform Act gives vote to middle classes. Durham University founded.

1833–7  *Lives of the British Admirals* in 4 volumes.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Volumes 1 and 2 of <em>The Doctor</em> published anonymously.</td>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>Pension augmented. Peel’s offer of a baronetcy declined.</td>
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<td>1836–7</td>
<td>Commutation of tithes. Volumes 3 and 4 of <em>The Doctor</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Volume 5 of <em>The Doctor</em>. Young England group visits Keswick.</td>
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ABBREVIATIONS

For full bibliographical details see Works Cited

AR Annual Review
AJW Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner
AJR Antijacobin Review and Magazine
BC British Critic
BEM Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine
BoC Robert Southey, Book of the Church. 2 vols. 1824
BoRCC Charles Butler, Book of the Roman Catholic Church 1825
C&S S. T. Coleridge, On the Constitution of the Church and State 1830
CR Critical Review
CW Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Bollingen series
ER Edinburgh Review
HB History of Brazil
LE Letters from England by Don Manuel Alvarez Escriella translated from the Spanish
LSP Letters from Spain and Portugal
MR Monthly Review
The year 1798, which saw the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, also saw the launch of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* that would campaign so vigorously against what it saw as Catholic attempts to subvert the constitution. Yet in that same year, General Berthier removed the 81-year-old pope by an “Act of the Sovereign People.” When Pius VI asked to be allowed to die in Rome, Berthier replied, “One can die anywhere.” The pope kept the “fisherman’s ring” to pass it on to his successor, though Berthier evidently believed that there would not be another pope. Pius VI died the following year, a prisoner at Valence (Hales 114–15). Before hearing the news, Dr. John Sturges, Prebendary of Winchester and a champion of the Protestant Reformation, wrote in his *Reflections on Popery*:

No time can seem more unfavourable than the present for the success of the Roman Catholic Religion in every part of the world, or more discouraging to the hopes of its zealous partisans. We see it abolished as a national Religion in one vast country of Europe [France]… its Pontiff, a venerable old man, degraded, insulted, expelled from his capital, harassed with removals from place to place, treated with every kind of indignity and brutality… (Sturges 252)

Dr. Sturges does not suggest that the pope’s spiritual power depends on his residing in Rome, or that, with the death of Pius VI, the papacy “must necessarily become extinct.” But it was clear that the Catholic Church “since the time of its greatness was never in such a
state of humiliation as at present, and never so little likely to extend its influence” (253).

Even in Ireland, where the 1798 Rebellion, belatedly supported by an attempted French invasion, was directed against the ruling Anglican ascendancy, the Catholic Theobald McKenna could argue in his *Memoire* (1799) on the proposed Anglo-Irish Union, that “the supremacy of the Pope is practically little more than reverential” (*AJR* 8: 177–9). The Act of Union of 1800 was Pitt’s response to the 1798 Irish Rebellion. The Union of Great Britain and Ireland, effective from January 1, 1801, was a union of churches as well as of legislatures. The Act’s fifth article provides that “the Continuance and Preservation of the said United Church, as the established Church of England and Ireland, shall be deemed and taken to be an essential part of the Union” (Costin and Watson 2: 25–6). Three decades later, Coleridge would succinctly state the contradictory situation created by the Union: “Three-fourths of His Majesty’s Irish subjects are Roman Catholics, with a papal priesthood, while three-fourths of the sum total of His Majesty’s subjects are Protestants” (*C&S* 150). Both Southey and Coleridge would play key roles in the ensuing debate, and would join in defending the Established Church against the presumed danger of admitting Catholics to the Westminster Parliament. Yet in the 1790s, both poets ranged themselves against the Established Church. In 1795, Coleridge, son of the vicar of Ottery St. Mary, would assert: “He who sees any real difference between the Church of Rome and the Church of England possesses optics which I do not possess—the mark of antichrist is on both of them” (*CW* 1: 210). Coleridge’s Unitarian views, acquired at Cambridge, would lead him to consider becoming a Unitarian minister—a career choice made unnecessary by the Wedgwood family’s generous annuity that enabled him to write poetry instead.

By May 1798, Coleridge was already admitting the insufficiencies of the Unitarian faith. As he wrote to John Prior Estlin, Unitarian minister of Lewin’s Mead Presbyterian Church, Bristol: “Thanksgiving is pleasant in the performance; but prayer and direct confession I find most serviceable to my spiritual health when I can do it. But tho’ all my doubts are done away, tho’ Christianity is my *Passion*, it is too much my *intellectual* Passion; and therefore will do me little good in the hour of temptation and calamity” (*CL* 1: 407). It would still be another 29 years before Coleridge again received the Anglican sacrament. In the mid-1790s, Southey shared Coleridge’s Unitarian theology, his radical politics, and his dream of settling on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania. But he also shared Wordsworth’s
concern for the victims of commercial greed and for the civilian casualties of war. Southey’s sympathy for the disadvantaged in society would stay with him throughout his life—accusations of political apostasy notwithstanding. His own first volume of poems, published by Cottle in 1797, included such targets as the slave trade—attacked by Coleridge in his 1795 Bristol lecture—and the transportation to Botany Bay of so-called Jacobins convicted of sedition. Yet such titles as “The Pauper’s Burial,” “The Soldier’s Wife,” and “The Widow” would not have seemed out of place in *Lyrical Ballads*. Topics such as Wordsworth’s “Old Man Travelling,” which in the 1798 version focused on a son dying in hospital from wounds sustained in a naval battle (Owen 105–6), could be seen as “war poetry.” To the weekly *Anti-Jacobin* and its successor, the monthly *Anti-Jacobin Review*, such themes seemed subversive of the war effort, besides being below the dignity of poetry. It was Southey’s 1797 collection, not the anonymous first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, which was subjected to devastating parodies (*AJW* 1: 35–6, 69–72; *AJR* 6: 115–18).

The Pittite press had stronger reasons for attacking Southey. His epic poem *Joan of Arc*, published in Bristol in 1796, though medieval in theme was seen as giving aid and comfort to Britain’s enemies (*MR* 31: 362–3). But 1796 had another significance for Southey that is central to the argument of this book. He spent the winter of 1795–6 in Lisbon with his uncle, the Rev. Herbert Hill, who was chaplain to the British commercial community in the city. Hill had hoped that his nephew would take Anglican orders, but now recognized that the young radical’s theological views made that impossible. So in order to disentangle him from the folly of the collapsing Pantisocratic project on the Susquehanna, and to provide some worldly experience, Southey’s uncle took him to Lisbon. More than 30 years later, Southey would tell his clergyman son-in-law, John Warter:

> My voyage was to Portugal, and you know how much it has influenced the direction of my studies. My uncle advised me at that time to turn my thoughts towards the history of that country, when he saw how eagerly I was inquiring into its literature, and more especially its poetry. Then my mind was not ripe enough for historical pursuits; but the advice was not without effect; and when I went again to Portugal, after an absence of four years, I began to look for materials, and set to work. (*L&C* 6: 98)

Southey must have been thinking of his long-cherished ambition to write a history of Portugal, of which his three-volume *History of Brazil* was meant to be only a part. What was life-changing was that
Southey’s Lisbon vacation of 1795–6 brought him face-to-face with the extravagances of Portuguese and Spanish Catholicism.

On his return to England, Southey published in 1797 a hastily written account of his travels and impressions, thus predating the Irish Rebellion, Napoleon’s imprisonment of the pope, the Irish Act of Union, and George III’s scruples over whether admitting Catholics to the Westminster Parliament would contravene his coronation oath. Southey’s *Letters written during a short residence in Spain and Portugal* shows that he had already embarked on his sustained criticism of Catholicism, which would generate more than 30 years of colorful rhetoric in his historical and polemical writing. In the 1797 edition of the *Letters*, he remarks: “The sight of a Monastery or a Monk always fills me with mingled emotions of pity and disgust: foul and filthy men without accomplishments or virtues, or affections, it is yet the system they are subject to that has made them what they are…” (1797: 271). And even more strikingly: “Almost I regret the Moors: what has this country gained by their expulsion? A solemn and cleanly superstition has been exchanged for the filth and ferocity of Monks, and the dogma of Mary’s immaculate conception has taken the place of the divine legation of Mohammed” (81). Both passages are omitted from the third edition of 1808, substantially rewritten after Southey’s second stay in Lisbon in 1800–1—this time to improve his health. When the new two-volume 1808 edition appeared, there was a British army in Portugal, a British government elected on a “no popery” ticket, and the debate on Catholic Emancipation raging in full flood.

Yet in 1800, Unitarianism, rather than Catholicism, was seen to be the greater threat to the Established Church. During the first half of the year, the *Antijacobin Review* targets Priestley himself and his fellow-Unitarians Thomas Belsham, John Kentish, and Joshua Toulmin (*AJR* 5: 100). During those six months, the same journal quotes the bishop of Lincoln’s insistence that the early church regarded non-Trinitarians as heretics, commends a biography by William Jones (author of *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*), censures Archdeacon William Paley for displaying “all the rancour with all the ignorance of a Priestley,” and advises Gilbert Wakefield to forsake republicanism and “devote his fine talents and learning to pure poetry and criticism” (*AJR* 5: 4, 123, 136, 141). The newly founded *Monthly Magazine*, under its Unitarian editor Richard Phillips, is denounced by one of the *Anti-Jacobin’s* correspondents as “that vile compendium of Jacobinism” (*AJR* 5: 338), while the long-established *Monthly Review* is reprimanded for its “panegyric” on the published poems of the
Unitarian Samuel Rogers, whose poetry fails to show “one trait of original genius” (AJR 5: 72). Dr. Andrew Kippis, Unitarian minister and founder of the *New Annual Register*, is rebuked for his “open hostility to the church” and for his part in turning the *Monthly Review* into “the established vehicle of Arianism and Presbyterianism” (AJR 6: 89). And noting that the *Critical Review* has joined the *Monthly* “in its hostility to orthodoxy and the established church,” the *Anti-Jacobin* characterizes the *Critical* as “still breathing out the old *virus* of Presbyterianism inflamed with the worser *virus* of new Arianism, or Socinianism, or new Deism” (AJR 6: 89).

Such facetious virulence at the Unitarians’ expense contrasts with the serious tone of a prospectus appended to the *British Critic* for January 1801. Advertising a new publication to be called *The Orthodox Churchman’s Magazine*, the prospectus offers a “biography of eminent or pious Divines,” a review of new publications in Divinity, “sacred poetry, original and select,” obituaries, and “a regular list of Church Preferments.” But the main thrust of the promised publication is toward “the proceedings of the Religious Societies at home,” and in particular, “the State of Infidelity, Methodism and various Sectarians; with occasional Accounts of Religion upon the Continent and other parts of Christendom.” The four-page prospectus makes clear that the *Orthodox Churchman* will be fighting a war on two fronts. A Church of England magazine was now an “absolute necessity” at a time when

what is called Catholic Emancipation, the policy of our enemies abroad, and the clamours of those of the Romish communion at home, with all the host of Atheists, Deists, Dissenters, and Schismatics of every description, are uniting their efforts to overthrow that mild, that venerable Establishment, which emanating like the dawn of a cloudless day from the dark and gloomy times of the Monkish superstition, shone with a bright and radiant lustre at the glorious Reformation… (prospectus of 4 pages follows BC 17: 100).

The prospectus also cautions against “the prevalent notion that the dangers of Popery have decreased, in consequence of the general improvement in the liberal sciences and the most enlightened politics of Europe.” Praise is lavished on George III’s “royal fortitude” for accepting the resignation of William Pitt and his ministers rather than violating his coronation oath. Catholic Emancipation “would have brought with it the repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts, and consequently would have erected Popery, Socinianism or Atheism upon the ruins of the Orthodox Faith” (BC 17: prospectus 3). So in
the very month in which the Act of Union came into effect, the ecclesiastical battleground of the next three decades was delineated.

Pitt’s resignation had come only a matter of weeks before the appearance of the first issue of the *Orthodox Churchman*. In a letter dated January 31, 1801, Pitt assured the king that Catholic Emancipation “would be attended with no danger to the established church.” He argued that “those principles formerly held by Catholics, which made them considered as politically dangerous, have been for a course of time gradually declining, and, among the higher orders particularly, have ceased to prevail.” The days of foreign pretenders abetted by Catholic governments were over. What was now needed was “a distinct political test pointed against the doctrines of modern Jacobinism” (Hague 469–70). Historians have had difficulty in accepting that Pitt could really have resigned on the issue of Catholic relief—or that he could have considered Ireland worth the sacrifice of his premiership. Yet Castlereagh (chief secretary for Ireland, 1799–1801) argued that union with Ireland made Catholic Emancipation necessary, while Cornwallis (viceroy and commander-in-chief in Ireland, 1798–1801) complained of the “folly” of describing the Irish Rebellion as a Catholic uprising, when it was really a Jacobin one (Whelan 148). Southey would soon be briefly in Ireland himself, based in Dublin as secretary to the Irish chancellor of the exchequer (see chapter 2). But he had been out of England, on his second visit to Portugal, from April 1800 to July 1801. So he missed the *Orthodox Churchman*’s declaration of war against “the dangers of Popery,” and the drama of Pitt’s resignation as prime minister at the end of January 1801, only weeks before the new journal’s first issue appeared. Yet Southey’s own views on the iniquities of the Catholic Church, first formed in 1795–6, had since been confirmed by his second stay in Lisbon. He had hardly arrived in the city in May 1800 before writing to his mother: “You would not like the Catholic religion half so well, if you saw it here in all its naked nonsense—could you but see the mummer, and smell the friars” (*L&C* 2: 76).

George III’s insistence on standing by the terms of his coronation oath provoked an immediate pamphlet exchange. Probably the first to be written (though not the first to be published) was by the Rev. John Milner, “Rome’s brazen serpent” of Coleridge’s verse, and (from 1803) vicar apostolic to the Midland district of England, and bishop (*in partibus infidelis*) of Castabala. In the 1790s, as a priest ministering to the Catholics of Winchester, Milner had managed to get Parliament to tone down the oath of allegiance prescribed in the Catholic Relief Act of 1791. The Act opened various civil positions to
English Catholics, including the lower ranks of the armed forces—but not seats in Parliament. Thanks to newly formed links between Milner and the Anglican bishops of Salisbury and Hereford, and also to the persuasive speeches of Samuel Horsley (then bishop of St. David’s) in the House of Lords, the proposed oath was replaced by the less-offensive wording of the 1774 Irish oath of allegiance. As Horsley explained to their lordships, Milner and his traditional or transalpine Catholics were ready to renounce the doctrine that faith need not be kept with heretics, and to disclaim as “impious and unchristian” the belief that princes excommunicated by the pope might justifiably be assassinated. But while denying that monarchs might be deposed, the transalpine clergy balked at describing the deposing power as “impious, unchristian and damnable.” In the 1820s, Milner would engage directly with Southey (see chapter 7). Meanwhile, somewhat ironically, the Catholic Milner had been introduced to the Anglican bishops by George Huntingford, warden of Winchester College, who would write as bishop of Hereford to congratulate Southey on his *Book of the Church*. But now, proof copies of Milner’s *Case of Conscience Solved* (1801) had been sent to “certain eminent personages then in power,” who advised him against agitating the question of the coronation oath. But John Reeves’s newly published *Considerations on the Coronation Oath* seemed to have been written with access to a copy of Milner’s unpublished work (Milner v–vi).

In the mid-1790s, Reeves had been the moving spirit behind the Loyal Associations set up to counter the so-called Jacobin political societies demanding Parliamentary reform. The Rev. Robert Nares, cofounder and editor of the *British Critic*, was a committee member of the Loyal Association. Reeves now argued that the 1688 Revolution Settlement intended the coronation oath to be a brake on the sovereignty of Parliament. He recognized that, while the sovereignty of Parliament remains absolute, “fortunately for us,” the supreme power of the state was lodged not merely in Parliament but in the monarch, “whose political character gave a sort of individuality to the nation; and who, in all succession of time, might set himself against every attempt that should be made, even by his ministers and parliament, to repeal the Protestant constitution which they intended to fix for ever” (Reeves 21–2). The coronation oath administered to Charles II had required the king to maintain the laws and customs “according to the Laws of God, the true Profession of the Gospel Established in this Kingdom and agreeable to the Prerogative of the Kings thereof, and the Ancient Customs of the Realm.” The oath administered to William III and Mary in 1689, replaced the royal
prerogative with parliamentary sovereignty. And while the 1689 oath retained “Laws of God, the true Profession of the Gospel,” it added the crucial words: “and the Protestant reformed religion established by law” (Costin and Watson 1: 58–9; Reeves 25–6). Milner, in his *Case of Conscience Solved*, had noted that William III was the first English monarch who had to swear to maintain the Protestant establishment, yet who, “almost immediately afterwards,” promoted an act for altering the oaths of supremacy and allegiance in favor of Dissenters. The new monarch also agreed to the Presbyterian establishment in Scotland. Milner presumes that William was persuaded to agree to these changes, “on the ground that whatever measures were necessary for the security of the Church of England, were in the true spirit of his Coronation Oath” (Milner 1807: 17). He recalls that, when Corsica was briefly under the British crown from 1794 to 1796, its new constitution declared the Catholic religion to be “the sole religion of the country, and the Pope was even allowed a share in appointing to its bishoprics, as they became vacant” (1807: 22).

As for the present, Milner asks whether it could have been foreseen, when the coronation oath was revised, that “Ireland, from being a dependency of Great Britain, would be associated in a legislative union with it, and that instead of ruling the Catholic inhabitants with the iron hand of power, it would become wise and necessary to cherish them in the bosom of paternal affection?” Was the French Revolution foreseen a century before? And unconsciously echoing Pitt, Milner asks whether it is “from the side of Popery, or from the opposite quarter of Jacobinism, that the Established Church is most in danger at the present day?” The obligation of “maintaining this Church to the utmost of the Sovereign’s power, requires a different line of conduct and politics from that which was pursued at his Majesty’s accession to the throne” (1807: 29). Milner argues, following Blackstone, that parliamentary sovereignty would be nullified if the king, as a branch of the legislature, were restrained (as Reeves implied) from giving his assent to the votes of both Houses of Parliament “in a matter of this nature.” If Catholic Emancipation were to be carried merely on the strength of the royal prerogative, Milner could have accepted the scruple of conscience. But, as the expediency of the measure is to be submitted to both Houses of Parliament, and His Majesty’s decision would be guided by their votes, Milner is “lost in astonishment” that such a scruple should be entertained “either by any lawyer, or by any divine.” He concludes that, if the coronation oath is not contrary to the indulgences granted to Dissenters in William III’s reign, “it does not now stand against the same favours being extended to Catholics”
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(1807: 31–4). Reeves takes his stand on the events of the 1680s, when James II took Catholics into his Privy Council: “Who can doubt of the like consequences when the law shall directly authorize Papists to sit with Protestants in the national councils?” (Reeves: 44).

When the first edition of the Case Solved was already in the press, there appeared a pamphlet from Charles Butler, who would later become Southey’s other principal Catholic antagonist—Coleridge’s “courteous Butler.” Milner appends an extract from Letter to a Nobleman (1801) in which Butler recalls that the words of the coronation oath require the sovereign not only to “maintain the Protestant religion established by law,” but also pledge him “to govern the people according to the statutes in parliament agreed on, and the laws and customs of the same.” Given those words, Butler argues, “it would be absurd in the extreme, unconstitutional and even treasonable, to contend that the expression in question precludes his Majesty from concurring with both houses of parliament in any legislation whatsoever.” Butler adds the reminder that the terms of the coronation oath were fixed in Ireland in the first year of William and Mary, when Catholic peers had seats and voting rights in the Irish House of Lords, and Catholic commoners in the Irish House of Commons. Irish civil and military offices were then open to Catholics, who lost those rights only by the Acts of 1692 and 1693, and in the first and second years of Queen Anne. Butler argues that the coronation oath can refer only to “the system of law, which was in force when the Act which prescribed it, was passed” (Milner 1807: 35–6, citing Butler). Both Butler and Milner may be guilty of scoring debating points, rather than meeting their opponents halfway. But at least the tone of controversy is reasoned, courteous, and respectful.

Although the Case of Conscience Solved was written before publication of Reeves’s Considerations on the Coronation Oath, Milner was able to respond by doubling the length of his own pamphlet with the addition of the Butler excerpts and a “Supplement” dated March 15, 1801—the month in which a review of Reeves’s second edition appeared in the British Critic (17: 284–90). In the supplement, Milner’s previously emollient tone is not always maintained. In rebutting Reeves’s claim that the Act of Union was intended to close the debate with Rome, Milner argues that its terms imply no greater prohibition against Catholics “than there is against Presbyterianism, Mahometanism or any other religion that does not agree in doctrine, worship, discipline and government with the Church of England.” Both the Scottish and Irish Acts of Union merely undertook to maintain Anglican doctrine and discipline “in their primitive state, against