

THE EIGHTEENTH- AND EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY REPUTATION OF DAVID HUME
AS REFLECTED IN REPRESENTATIVE PERIODICALS

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A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF DAVID HUME'S PUBLICATIONS

The accompanying paper on the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century reputation of David Hume refers to the following works of the philosopher, which are listed in chronological order and which include self-critical notes contained in Hume's autobiographical pamphlet as it appears in The Philosophical Works of David Hume (Boston, 1884), I, xiii-xdi:

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| 1739- 40 | <u>Treatise of Human Nature</u> | This initial publication " <u>fell dead-born from the press, without reaching such distinction as even to excite a murmur among the zealots.</u> " |
| 1741- 42 | <u>Essays Moral and Political (First Part)</u> | Hume states that they were received favorably. |
| 1748 | <u>Philosophic Essays concerning Human Understanding (Revision of the first part of the Treatise of Human Nature)</u> | This effort was little more successful than the first. |
| 1751 | <u>An Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals (Revision of the second part of the Treatise of Human Nature)</u> | Hume considered this "incomparably the best" of all his work but said that it "came unnoticed into the world." |
| 1752 | <u>Political Discourses (Second part of the Essays Moral and Political)</u> | They were "well received abroad and at home." |
| 1754 | <u>The History of Great Britain under the House of Stuart, Vol. I.</u> | Hume states that it was greeted with "one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation." |
| 1757 (for 1756) | <u>The History of England under the House of Stuart, Vol. II.</u> | This work, dealing with the Commonwealth, Charles II, and James II, was better received because it gave less displeasure to the Whigs. |
| 1757 | <u>Four Dissertations</u> | The reception of this work, which included the "Natural History of Religion," was rather obscure, "except only that Dr. Hurd wrote a pamphlet against it, with all the illiberal petulance, arrogance, and scurrility which distinguish the Warburtonian school." |
| 1759 | <u>The History of England under the House of Tudor, 2 vols.</u> | These volumes raised a "clamor" almost as great as that directed against the Stuart history. |

- 1762 The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Accession of Henry VII, 2 vols. Hume states that they were published with "but tolerable success."
- 1766 A concise and genuine account of the dispute between Mr. Hume and Mr. Rousseau.
- 1776 The Life of David Hume, Esq. written by Himself.
- 1777 Two essays "Of Suicide" and "Of
(1783) the Immortality of the Soul."
1777 (anon.); 1783 ascribed to David Hume.
- 1779 Dialogues concerning Natural Religion.

Special reference is also made to the essays "Of the Jealousy of Trade" and "Of the Coalition of Politics" (part of the Essays Moral and Political) and to the essay "On Miracles" (in the Philosophic Essays concerning Human Understanding).

THE EIGHTEENTH- AND EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY REPUTATION OF DAVID HUME
AS REFLECTED IN REPRESENTATIVE PERIODICALS

To seek details of the reputation of David Hume during his life (1711 [o.s.] - 1776) one can turn to such periodicals as the Monthly Review and the Critical Review for contemporary formal reviews, to the Gentleman's Magazine for public reaction principally during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and, lastly, to the Edinburgh Review for impressions of posthumous reputation. Examination of materials devoted to Hume terminates with an 1828 reference for the reason that by this time his reputation approximates that of his modern acceptance.

A convenient way to trace the development of Hume's reputation during the period in question is to note consecutively the materials of the four periodicals under each of four separate headings: (1) Personal Character; (2) Literary Characteristics; (3) Political Views; and (4) Religious and Philosophical Views. This division not only has the advantage of providing for the comparison and contrast of editorial opinions in the several fields, but also sequentially illustrates those values by which Hume's ultimate reputation was determined.

Personal Character

Certain biographical materials can be singled out for attention because of their appraisal of Hume's character. With the exception of various reviews of his account of the dispute with Rousseau, all of this material is posthumous and deals chiefly with the Autobiography. There are, moreover, separate apologies and criticisms which reflect the character of Hume, as well as references to his personal habits and character, in Francis Hardy's Life of Lord Charlemont (1810).

By 1765 Hume was well enough known in England and Scotland to create public interest in his celebrated quarrel with the French philosopher

Rousseau. When the facts of the dispute became known, it is clear that the image of Hume as a mild-mannered and benevolent gentleman became greatly enhanced. The Gentleman's Magazine, the Monthly Review, and the Critical Review for November, 1766, all carry summaries and comments on the recent publication A concise and genuine account of the dispute between Mr. Hume and Mr. Rousseau, which, according to the Gentleman's Magazine, was originally written by Hume and circulated only among his friends to justify himself against any accusation that offences taken had been aggravated by his own sensibility.¹ The affair began in 1762 when Hume in Edinburgh was informed by a friend in Paris that Rousseau was seeking asylum in England after having become involved in difficulties with the parliament in Paris over his Emile. In an exchange of letters, Hume offered Rousseau a retreat in his Edinburgh home. This gracious invitation was not accepted until 1765 when Rousseau tired of his circumstances in Motiers Travers on the borders of Switzerland. Soon after Rousseau's final settlement in Wootton, Derbyshire, transactions initiated earlier by Hume to secure a secret pension for Rousseau from the King were continued. At about this time, however, a letter written by Horace Walpole under the signature of the King of Prussia was published in the St. James's Chronicle. It must be quoted in full to convey the tone which so infuriated Rousseau:

My dear John James,

You have renounced Geneva, your native soil. You have been driven from Switzerland, a country of which you have made such boast in your writings. In France you are outlawed: come then to me. I admire your talents, and amuse myself with your reveries; on which, however, by the way, you bestow too much time and attention. It is high time to grow prudent and happy; you have made yourself sufficiently talked of for singularities little becoming a truly great man: show your enemies that you have sometimes common sense: this will vex them without hurting you. My dominions will afford you a peaceful retreat: I am desirous to do you good, and will do it, if you can but think it such. But if you are determined to refuse my assistance, you may expect that I shall say not a word about it to any one. If you persist in perplexing your brains to find out new misfortunes, chuse such as you like best; I am a King, and can make

you as miserable as you can wish; at the same time, I will engage to do that which your enemies never will; I will cease to persecute you, when you are no longer vain of persecution.

Your sincere Friend,

FREDERIC²

Having read this letter in the St. James's Chronicle, Hume was much surprised to read in the same paper several days later a letter from Rousseau to the "Author" (apparently editor) of the paper charging that "this letter was fabricated at Paris; and, what rends and afflicts my heart, that the impostor hath his accomplices in England." Rousseau, of course, had wrongly assumed that the letter was written by D'Alembert in Paris and published by Hume in England; thus, he considered his "dearest friend" transformed into "a treacherous and malignant enemy."³ In spite of Hume's subsequent efforts to get Rousseau to accept a pension and his several letters insisting on his innocence of complicity in the whole affair, Rousseau persisted in his outrage and finally summarized his complaints against Hume in a letter to Richard Davenport of Calveley. The Gentleman's Magazine describes these complaints as "fanciful and absurd in the highest degree." Moreover, the absurdity of Rousseau's displeasure is revealed in the fact that the supposed causes for complaint occurred for the most part before he moved to Wootton, the place from which he subsequently wrote letters to Hume containing "expressions of the utmost gratitude, affection, and complacency."⁴ Hume's account of the dispute was at first private because "he would not unnecessarily censure M. Rousseau"; but when a letter by Rousseau to a Paris bookseller charging Hume "with confederating to betray and defame him" was translated and published in the London newspapers, it became necessary for Hume to publish his own account. This account was translated first into French and published abroad, whence it was retranslated into English and published in England, with revisions, under the title A concise and genuine account of the dispute between Mr. Hume and Mr. Rousseau. Letters of Walpole and

D'Alembert were appended as evidence of Rousseau's misapprehension.⁵ In general, it may be said that Hume's attitude, in conduct and in letter, was exceptionally benevolent and reasonable. If the publication of the account does betray the philosopher's concern for his own reputation, at the same time his narration reveals those qualities of mildness of temper and reasoned judgment that were more and more to become recognized as his outstanding virtues. In view of later vigorous criticism of the moral implications of Hume's principles or lack of them, there may be a note of unpremeditated irony in the Gentleman's Magazine's comment on the Hume-Rousseau affair:

It is much to be regretted, that the disgrace of Mr Rousseau, and the vexation and disappointment of Mr Hume, are but a small part of the mischief that such ingratitude for such friendship is likely to produce. It tends to chill benevolence, and repress liberality; many may be left to struggle with adversity unassisted, in consequence of such a return for assistance as Mr Rousseau has made to Mr Hume.⁶

The Monthly Review concluded that Hume had "acted the part of a generous and disinterested friend to Mr. Rousseau";⁷ and the Critical Review concurred in this opinion, except that it found it "to the discredit of letters and true philosophy" that "two men of such celebrated genius and approved merit" should be "at public variance."⁸ As could be expected, the least charitable construction was that of Dr. Warburton, whose Letters from a late Eminent Prelate to one of his Friends was reviewed with disdain by the Edinburgh Review in 1809. The Review quotes Warburton's "liberal commentary" on Hume's treatment of Rousseau as follows:

"It is a truth easily discoverable from his writings, that Hume could have but one motive in bringing him over (for he was under the protection of Lord Mareshal), and that was, cherishing a man whose writings were as mischievous to society as his own. There is an immense distance between their natural genius: none at all in their excessive vanity; and much again in their good faith. Rousseau's warmth has made him act the madman in his philosophic inquiries, so that he oft saw not the mischief which he did: Hume's coldness made him not only see but rejoice in his. But it is neither parts nor logic that has made either of them philosophers, but infidelity only. For which, to be sure, they both equally deserve a PENSION."⁹

Similarly negative criticism of Hume's behavior in this celebrated affair

lies in the Edinburgh Review's account (September, 1814) of a French work by Baron de Grimm. DeGrimm conceived that "the philosopher who retained his senses ought to have had so much consideration for his brother who had lost them, as to have withheld from the public the melancholy story of his extravagance."¹⁰

David Hume died August 25, 1776. In the following year The Life of David Hume, Esq. written by Himself was published by Strahan and Cadell. The Gentleman's Magazine for March, 1777, contains a brief, concise summary of the autobiographical pamphlet;¹¹ and the issue for the following month includes some "strictures" on the autobiography written by Thomas Cadell, the publisher. In calling attention to Hume's remarks on the poor reception of the first volume of his History of Great Britain, Mr. Cadell suggests that Hume had not done himself justice in so belittling the initial response. He cites, for example, the testimony of the late Earl of Corke, who in 1755 was reading Hume's History and finding it "perfectly entertaining."¹²

The attention which the Monthly Review devotes to The Life of David Hume is prefaced by a recognition of the special interest the public must have in the death of such a man as Hume:

When men of such PARTS, and such PRINCIPLES, as those which distinguish the character and writings of Mr. Hume, come to face the immediate terrors of death, the world is always curious to learn in what manner they support the trying conflict; whether the near approach of that awful change of situation which they are about to experience, (in an hour wherein one would think, the boldest mortal would not dare either to DISSEMBLE or to TRIFLE) has produced any change in their minds; whether they continue fixed, and steady to their past professions; or, whether "new light" is let into "the soul's dark cottage"; as the poet expressed it, "through the chinks" of its ruins, -- opening wider, at the moment when the battered fabric is tottering to its dissolution.¹³

If the divines had expected a deathbed repentance, they were disappointed, for as Adam Smith wrote, "Mr. Hume expired, - in such a happy composure of mind, that nothing could exceed it." To this observation the Monthly Review adds the comment of a reverent and truly orthodox divine, "Oh! what good

Christian would not wish to die such a death!"¹⁴ A letter to William Strahan from Adam Smith, to whom Hume had left all of his papers, was appended to The Life of David Hume. Besides the account of Hume's last illness, it contains Smith's evaluation of Hume's character:

Thus died our most excellent, and never to be forgotten friend; concerning whose philosophical opinions men will, no doubt, judge variously, everyone approving, or condemning them, according as they happen to coincide or disagree with his own; but concerning whose character and conduct there can scarce be a difference of opinion. His temper, indeed, seemed to be more happily balanced, if I may be allowed such an expression, than that perhaps of any other man I have ever known. . . . It never was the meaning of his raillery to mortify; and therefore, far from offending, it seldom failed to please and delight, even those who were the objects of it. . . . Upon the whole, I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit.¹⁵

With reference to Smith's judgment that Hume was "perfectly wise," the Gentleman's Magazine remarks characteristically,¹⁶ "That Mr. Hume had an amiable temper, extensive learning, and many virtues, we readily grant, but cannot, with Dr. Adam Smith, think any man 'perfectly wise,' who is not wise unto salvation."¹⁷ As for the peacefulness of Hume's death, a contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine for July, 1777, attempts to distinguish between the deaths of Hume and Hooker. The remarks are addressed to the author of An Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume, who, apparently, had written that he saw no "distinct difference between the last moments of Hume and Hooker." The correspondent admits that so far as "external appearances" are concerned there may have been no difference, "but one would think," he goes on to say, "a philosopher (as the Apologist seems to lay claim to that title) would not attend to outward appearances only." If the apologist, however, should "view the mind, the internal reason and sentiment," in other words, the things that distinguish men from brutes, and still wonder about the superiority of Hooker's death, then the correspondent declares that he will answer for the author of the Ecclesiastical Polity, that "he died as becomes a rational being, having a pleasing hope

that he was endued with a soul immortal . . . and maintaining to the last his superior rank above the brute creation." Hume, on the other hand, "died in doubt and uncertainty, as he had ever lived, and at death sunk (according to his own system) into a state level with the irrational beasts of the field." Eschewing the likelihood of being called a "bigot, an enthusiast, or an enemy to human learning," the correspondent "will still maintain that this is a noble superiority."¹⁸ Thus, Hume had not been dead a year before the Gentleman's Magazine became a channel through which the champions of revealed religion could vent their spleen against the sceptical philosopher. This is in direct contrast to the more rational position assumed by the Monthly Review and the Critical Review in regard to the Life of David Hume.

In addition to its summary of the principal facts of Hume's autobiography, the Critical Review delineates the chief features of the narrative:

The whole of this narrative breathes ingenuousness, and a noble consciousness of integrity, not without that solicitude of literary, as well as moral fame, which we may suppose to have animated a writer, so distinguished, from his earliest years, for his ardor in the pursuits of philosophy and general learning.¹⁹

In singling out Hume's "noble consciousness of integrity" and his "solicitude of literary, as well as moral fame," the Critical Review hit upon what is perhaps as precise a definition as is possible of the character of the Scottish philosopher.

Three other periodical reviews of the early nineteenth century merit consideration for their evaluation of the life of David Hume. In 1807 Cadell published Thomas Edward Ritchie's An Account of the Life and Writings of David Hume, Esq. The Critical Review notes little claim to originality in this publication but appreciates it for the fact that it brings together in one body "all that has hitherto appeared concerning a man who is undoubtedly one of the great ornaments of English literature."²⁰

The volume is described in the review as exciting a highly favorable impression of the personal, intellectual, and moral qualities of the philosopher. Prominent among Hume's traits were "general benevolence," "great amenity of manner," and "a temper not to be ruffled by accidents, nor susceptible of the meaner passions of envy and jealousy." While it is suggested that the foundations of this disposition "may have been laid in a phlegmatic temperament, the gift of nature," it was nevertheless cherished and confirmed by Hume's "studious habits and his conviction of the great importance of such dispositions in the necessary intercourse between man and man." The reviewer concludes that in every respect the private history of David Hume authenticated that his actions were never at variance with his professions. As evidence of this, it is noted that, at a time when Dr. Robertson was in high favor as an historian and Hume had been received with coldness, Hume acted toward him with "so much warmth of congratulation, so much sincerity of advice, so much readiness to impart useful knowledge, as set beyond controversy the candour and integrity of his art, and evince that his pretensions to philosophy were not belied by his practice."²¹ Another incident cited in support of Hume's dispassionate concern for truth concerns the proceedings of the General Assembly after the attention of the general public had been called to the merits of Hume's works in 1755. The Scottish Church was divided into conservative and liberal factions, and the zealots were particularly scandalized by the liberals' friendship with such "apostles of infidelity" as Hume and Lord Kames. A series of debates took place, the results of which were favorable to the cause of philosophical liberty; and the issue was dismissed by a majority of the Presbytery. The reviewer considers it characteristic of Mr. Hume that no mention of this important episode was included in his memoirs. "The conduct of Mr. Hume on this occasion," he says, "shows how little he was influenced by such paltry passions, and that

in the publication of his opinions his principal motive was a firm persuasion that they were founded in truth."²²

The relationship between Kames and Hume at the time they were involved in the Assembly debates is examined from an entirely different point of view by an editorial "On the Character of David Hume, as exhibited by his own writings" written by "Crito" in the Gentleman's Magazine for November, 1808.²³ Referring to the recently published Memoirs of Lord Kames, Crito remarks that it brings "to light some curious features of the character of that great Champion of Scepticism, though otherwise (as it appears) a man endowed with a considerable portion of the social virtues, David Hume." Several of Mr. Hume's familiar letters were included in that work, which, according to Crito, "bring down the Philosopher to the ordinary level of human nature, and draw aside that veil of grave and dignified importance, which his metaphysical paradoxes, or as he pompously termed them discoveries, have thrown around him." Crito observes from these letters

that it was the Philosopher's ruling passion, from his first entrance into life, to distinguish himself by new, singular, and daring opinions; that he aspired at the glory of bringing about "an entire revolution in Philosophy"; and that the greatest calamity he dreaded was, to be overlooked, or to attract no attention from the literary world.

In Crito's opinion, Hume "cared not how great the price" of literary fame and "deliberately sacrificed his own peace of mind in pursuit of his empty bubble."²⁴ Quotations are cited from Hume's writings which, according to the critic, apparently escaped the scrutiny of James Beattie. This Scottish poet, who defined in his "Essay on Truth" the answers of Reid and his followers to Hume's scepticism, was credited by Samuel Johnson as having "confuted" the philosopher; but Sir Leslie Stephen has described him as "simply the mouthpiece of the vague cry of alarm which went up from the ordinary mass of mankind as they became aware that acute thinkers were in some sense sapping the foundations of their creed."²⁵ At any rate, Crito intends to

supplement Beattie's arguments with quotations from Hume which give "a striking picture of the misery of that man's mind, who, by his own melancholy confession, had so heated his brain with metaphysical subtleties, 'that he was ready to reject all belief and reasoning whatever, and could look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another.'" One such quotation reflects Hume's passionate concern for, or perhaps psychological dependence on, social approval:

When I look abroad, I foresee on every side dispute, contradiction, anger, calumny, and detraction. When I turn my eye inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. All the world conspires to oppose and contradict me; though such is my weakness, that I feel all my opinions loosen and fall of themselves, when unsupported by the approbation of others.²⁶

Such self-revelations are considered by Crite as going "farther towards the exposure of that vain and comfortless Philosophy, than all the laboured arguments of his controversial antagonists."²⁷

More intimate reflections upon Hume are contained in Francis Hardy's Life of Lord Charlemont, reviewed in the Edinburgh Review for November, 1811. Although the review concludes that Charlemont's account of Hume is more entertaining than accurate, it does not doubt that the account is a faithful record of Charlemont's impressions of the distinguished philosopher. It doubts, however, that an Irish lord, "on his first visit at a foreign court [Turin]" would be "precisely the person most capable of appreciating the value of such a man as David Hume."²⁸ Lord Charlemont provides an interesting physical description of the philosopher:

"Nature, I believe, never formed any man more unlike his real character than David Hume. The powers of physiognomy were baffled by his countenance; neither could the most skilful, in that science, pretend to discover the smallest trace of the faculties of his mind, in the unmeaning features of his visage. His face was broad and fat, his mouth wide, and without any other expression than that of imbecility. His eyes, vacant and spiritless; and the corpulence of his whole person was far better fitted to communicate the idea of a turtle-eating alderman, than of a refined philosopher. His speech, in English, was rendered ridiculous by the broadest Scotch accent; and his French was, if possible, still more laughable; so that wisdom, most certainly, never disguised

herself before in so uncouth a garb. Though now near fifty years old, he was healthy and strong; but his health and strength, far from being advantageous to his figure, instead of manly comeliness, had only the appearance of rusticity."²⁹

With reference to Hume's character, Charlemont states that "of all the philosophers of his sect, none, I believe, ever joined more real benevolence to his mischievous principles, than my friend Hume." He goes on to say that "his love to mankind was universal, and vehement; and there was no service he would not cheerfully have done to his fellow-creatures, excepting only that of suffering them to save their souls in their own way. He was tender-hearted, friendly, and charitable in the extreme."³⁰ An amusing anecdote is related about Hume's infatuation with a beautiful and accomplished lady of Turin: "One day he addressed her in the usual commonplace strain, that he was abliné, anéanti. — 'Oh! pour anéanti,' replied the lady, 'ce n'est en effet qu' une operation très naturelle de vôtre Système.'³¹ Charlemont is quoted as wondering how Hume had been able to endure the "French female Titans," for "in England, either his philosophic pride, or his conviction that infidelity was ill suited to women, made him perfectly averse from the initiation of ladies into the mysteries of his doctrine."³² Of Hume's behavior in controversy, Charlemont notes that he never failed "to give due praise to every thing tolerable that was either said or written against him." For example, when the Irish lord questioned him whether the curb of religion was not necessary to human nature, the philosopher replied: "'The objections,' answered he, 'are not without weight; but error never can produce good; and truth ought to take place of all considerations.'³³

Literary Characteristics

Of the literary merits of David Hume's work the Gentleman's Magazine appears to have nothing to say, but the other three journals have a great deal. In reviewing An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, Mr. Rose in the Monthly Review for January, 1752, remarks that "clearness

and precision of ideas on abstracted and metaphysical subjects, and at the same time propriety, elegance and spirit, are seldom found united in any writings in a more eminent degree than in those of Mr. Hume." It is the judgment of the reviewer, moreover, that the work in question will no doubt considerably raise Hume's reputation among the general public because of its freedom from the scepticism of his former pieces.³⁴ In the same issue, Mr. Rose commends Hume's Political Discourses for their "elegance and spirit," "clearness of reasoning," "great knowledge of history," and "comprehensive views of things."³⁵ Hume's Four Dissertations ("The Natural History of Religion," "Of the Passions," "Of Tragedy," and "Of the Standard of Taste") were reviewed by Rose in the Monthly for February, 1757. Noting that few contemporary writers are so generally read as Mr. Hume, Rose enumerates the qualities of his writing which recommend them to "every Reader of taste": a delicacy of sentiment, an original turn of thought, a perspicuity, and often an elegance of language.³⁶ A month earlier the same reviewer praised the second volume of Hume's History as "a masterly performance, with a succinct and animated narrative, a flowing yet correct diction, and pertinent reflections arising naturally from the subject."³⁷

The review of the Four Dissertations in the Critical Review of the same month and year echoes the warning that a discerning reader should not be misled by elegance of style. In connection with the first essay "The Natural History of Religion," it is premised that "authors of such acknowledged and distinguished abilities as Mr. Hume, are always to be read with care and caution, more especially on subjects of this nature, because wherever there is a power to please and to persuade, there is also a power to mislead and to betray"; and the reviewer warns against such complaisance toward a writer that his principles are adopted and sentiments imbibed simply from an admiration of his style.³⁸ A less cautious attitude is assumed in the Critical Review for November, 1758, where there is a review of a work written by "S. T."

Remarks upon the Natural History of Religion . . . with dialogues on heathen idolatry, and the christian religion. It is stated here that those who have called Hume obscure and paradoxical as a moralist and wild and ideal as a politician have not made their positions "good by a pen half so masterly as his own." Hume's sentiments are described as "generally new, ingenious, and deep, the result of a sound judgment, and fine imagination." While the philosopher is not defended as a politician and moralist and while a disposition to error is granted in his "extreme refinement, subtlety, and abstractedness," the reviewer labels these as "blemishes of a venial nature, if they are blemishes," and states that they are redeemed by the facts that "they tend to improve the rational faculty, fix the attention, and open the mind to a full display and exertion of its powers."³⁹ Similar praise is devoted to Two New Essays ("Of the Jealousy of Trade" and "Of the Coalition of Politics") reviewed in the Critical Review for June, 1760. They are described as reflecting "credit on the good sense, moderation, and public spirit of the elegant writer." The reviewer despairs of condensing Hume's meaning "in less compass than he has allowed it" and closes his article by observing that "the author runs no hazard of diminishing the reputation he has deservedly acquired of a refined, manly, and free enquirer, by this addition to his political works."⁴⁰ The Critical Review can be more specific in its literary criticism. In reviewing the second volume of Hume's History (The Commonwealth, Charles I, and James II), the Review is somewhat lenient about the historian's partiality to the Stuarts and his pique against the Protestant Dissenters, chalking these off as understandable prepossessions in no way warping Hume from the truth in any part of the narration.⁴¹ The reviewer, however, lists some animadversions with reference to style. He complains of affectation and deficiency in weight and simplicity. For example, affectation and periphrasis are cited in the following sentence from page 119, where Hume speaks of the Quakers:

Instead of that affected adulation introduced into modern tongues, of speaking to individuals as if they were a multitude; they returned to the simplicity of ancient languages; and thou and thee were the only expressions, which, on any consideration, they could be brought to employ.

The reviewer suggests that instead of "this diffuse period" the message might have been expressed in fewer words: "They used the simple appellatives thou and thee even to persons of the most distinguished rank." He is also critical of Hume's use of Latin idioms and Roman orthography in spelling words of Latin origin, such as favor, labor, honor, ardor, which, according to the reviewer, "appear like aliens in an English production." Hume is also criticized for by-passing the French in using such words as emergence and inconsistence instead of emergency and inconsistency. In addition, his numerous Scotisms are criticized, as well as some "ill sustained metaphors, such as a torrent irritated, territories in motion, [and] immeasurable ardor." Notwithstanding these blemishes, this volume is pronounced "one of the best histories which modern times have produced."⁴²

Hume's early nineteenth-century literary reputation is reflected by the Edinburgh Review. His style is compared with that of Dr. Robertson. In a review of Dugald Stewart's Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson, Robertson's style is described as "infinitely more faultless than Hume's, if it is less forcible." The excellencies of Robertson are defined as being of a more useful nature when history must deal with more ordinary things than "the downfall of kingdoms and hierarchies, or the romantic valour and faithfulness of Sydneys and Falklands."⁴³ In later issues of the journal, however, reviews are more complimentary to Hume. A lengthy criticism of a characteristic fault of contemporary literature is included in the Edinburgh Review's (February, 1811) discussion of Robert Southey's The Curse of Kehama. This fault, of which Southey is cited as an example, is described as

the offensive anxiety that our authors are continually showing to make the most of their talents and their materials--to miss no occasion to astonish and transport the reader--and to take

special care that nothing which they think beautiful or important shall pass unobserved, or be dismissed till its merits have been fully pointed out, and made apparent to the most negligent and inattentive. It is this miserable trick of overrating the importance of all our conceptions, that has made our recent literature so intolerably diffuse and voluminous.¹⁴⁴

In contrast to this, the reviewer notes that "no man . . . has now the forbearance to write essays as short as Hume's, even if he had talents to make them as good; nor will any one be contented with stating his views and arguments in a popular and concise manner, and leaving them to their fate; but we must have long speculative introductions—illustrations and digressions—objections anticipated and answered—verbose apologies, at once fulsome and modest—practical inferences—historical deductions—and predictions as to the effect of our doctrines, or the neglect of them, on the fate of men, and of the universe, in all time coming."¹⁴⁵ Further evidence of the Edinburgh Review's appreciation of Hume's literary abilities about a decade and a half later is to be found in its review of the second edition of Dr. Lingard's History of England.¹⁴⁶ Lingard's work is praised for its style and diction, but it is judged to contain nothing of "those general and comprehensive views, that sagacity and judgment, those masterly lessons of political wisdom, that profound knowledge of human nature, that calm philosophy, and dispassionate balancing of opinions, which delight and instruct us in the pages of Hume." The reviewer comments favorably on Hume's practice, disapproved by Lingard, of giving an historic form to discussions on grave and important questions by presenting the arguments on both sides of an issue "as having been actually proposed and urged at the time, by the contending parties." Conceiving that the object of history is to impart knowledge and not just to "load the memory with events," the reviewer regards these discussions not as fictions but as "political disquisitions, applicable to all times and places." Indeed, they are regarded as having a timeless quality because they are drawn from the recesses of Hume's own mind rather than from "the monkish chronicles,

where," according to the reviewer, "Dr. Lingard has probably sought for them in vain." Such truth and justice are ascribed to Hume's reflections that, in spite of the absence of any authority in contemporary annals, they are believed to "contain the sentiments and views, not only of the statesmen and parties to whom he ascribes them, but of politicians and nations, at all times and on all occasions when similar questions have arisen, since men were first united in society, and governed by their reason and reflections."⁴⁷

Political Views

Although the first volume of Hume's History of England sold only forty-five copies, it appears that by the end of the century his History had become popular. The successive volumes of the series received extensive reviews in the Monthly Review shortly after their publication, and Hume's political views are analyzed at length decades later in the Edinburgh Review in connection with its reviews of the writings of other historians. Except for its review of J. Towers' Observations on Mr. Hume's History of England, the Critical Review apparently did not devote much attention to the historical writings of Hume. It is also interesting to note that nothing appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine applicable to Hume's histories until 1785, when various letters were addressed to the editor condemning the Jacobite prejudices of Hume and other writers.

Hume began his History of England with the House of Stuart, because, as he writes in his memoirs, he was frightened at the prospect of continuing a narrative through 1700 years.⁴⁸ The first volume, which covered the reigns of James I and Charles I, was reviewed by Flexman in the Monthly Review for March, 1755. First of all reference is made to Hume's "elegant narration of facts and events" and his "pleasing, animated delineation of characters." The reviewer questions, however, whether elegance is necessary in a historian and asserts contrarily that "the more essential articles of IMPARTIALITY and

CONSISTENCY, will ever be regarded as the most valuable and most indispensable qualifications." The abilities of "this very ingenious writer" can be seen with pleasure employed on subjects to which they are appropriate, but Flexman's judgment is that "the history of his own country is the last he ought to have attempted." The indulgence which Hume as an historian claimed for his own "favorite system of religion or politics" is legitimate, in the reviewer's opinion, "only when such systems appear reconcilable to the real constitution of the government, and look with a benevolent aspect on the rights and liberties of the subjects." Hume is also charged with concealing or partially exhibiting necessary facts and sometimes presenting only "half-views and side-glances" at them.⁴⁹ The second volume of the Stuart history, covering the Commonwealth and the reigns of Charles II and James II, was reviewed by Rose in the Monthly for January, 1757. It is found to be more pleasureable than the first chiefly because there are "none of those indecent excursions on the subject of religion, which are to be met with in his first volume, and which must, no doubt, have given offense to every candid Reader." Nevertheless, with respect to that impartiality and inviolable respect to truth so indispensable to an historian, Hume is judged to be greatly deficient. His partiality is illustrated in the delineation of certain characters, where he censures with "too much alertness those whom he chuses to depreciate" or artfully endeavors "to give agreeable pictures of very disagreeable originals."⁵⁰

With the third and fourth volumes of his historical works, Hume began to write history in retrogression. His account of the House of Tudor in two volumes was reviewed by Ruffhead in the Monthly Review for April and May, 1759. Although Ruffhead observes that the writing of history backward is not the most natural or intelligible method, he commends Hume for confining himself to detached reigns rather than attempting at once a general

history. The reigns covered in these volumes are considered by the reviewer to be of great importance; and a judicious and perspicuous treatment of them requires, in his opinion, "an intimate acquaintance with the ancient Constitution of this kingdom, that is, the feudal system," which he apparently feels Hume lacked. He, therefore, takes issue with the historian's insinuation that the basis of civil liberty was not laid by Henry the Seventh; and this disagreement provides the framework for the reviewer's lengthy criticism. Ruffhead charges Hume with a "passion for singularity" and considers this as the source of his inconsistencies and improprieties. Again, there is the customary warning not to be misled by literary ingenuity:

[I]t should be considered, that although the reputation he has deservedly acquired in the literary world, may hide his defects from those who are content to take facts and sentiments upon truth, yet by such means they become more striking and observable to men, who are detached from personal prepossessions: and it becomes more immediately their duty, to obviate the impressions which error may make under the sanction of such acknowledged merit.⁵¹

The review concludes on a favorable note, with the claim that the exceptions taken have been "actuated by the spirit of free inquiry, not the malevolence of criticism," and with the pleasurable observation that "even . . . [Hume's] errors are generally the merits of genius, ever ambitious to be singular."⁵²

The concluding two volumes of the History, covering the period from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the Accession of Henry VII, were reviewed by Ruffhead in the Monthly Review for December, 1761, and February, 1762. In general, it can be said that Ruffhead is more extravagant in his praise of Hume than either Rose or Flexman. He appears to be less concerned about the religious issues and is most anxious about Hume's analysis of the sources of English constitutionalism and civil liberties. Ruffhead's praise of these volumes of the History is liberal partly because he sees in this period of English history "an abundant store to gratify curiosity" but "little matter to inflame zeal." He apologizes for the difficulties the historian

encountered in his dealing with the Houses of Tudor and Stuart; and in speaking of the political prejudices, the party divisions, and the religious bigotry which characterized this period, he concludes that "Mr. Hume's free and liberal craft of mind, was well adapted to reconcile their discordant principles." Since he was not a slave to any sect or party and was little biased by prejudice, Hume is credited with being able to accuse both Papists and Protestants, Royalists and Republicans, much to the disgust of both sides who, while having to admit the excellence of the writer, joined forces in condemning the historian. The only censure in this review is Ruffhead's refutation of Hume's opinion that the "commons were excluded from the Saxon Wittenagemot."⁵³ The reviewer's praise is continued in regard to the second volume. He commends them both as "the most just and masterly account of the reigns of our early Kings, that has hitherto been penned" and notes that "the attentive reader will find that philosophy and jurisprudence consistently go hand in hand with history."⁵⁴

The Critical Review's coverage of Hume's History is limited to its April, 1778, review of a book written by J. Towers titled Observations on Mr. Hume's History of England. Attention is called here to observations made in the book that few modern historical works were more read or more celebrated than Hume's and that for elegance and real and distinguished genius his reputation was well deserved. Nevertheless, Towers finds fidelity, accuracy, and impartiality lacking in Hume and proceeds to indict him for resorting to affectation and singularity in order to excite public attention. Towers intends his "observations" on certain passages in the History as "sufficient to evince, that whatever commendation may be due to Mr. Hume as an ingenious, elegant, and polished writer, he is not entitled to equal praise as an exact, faithful, and impartial historian."⁵⁵ It is not specifically stated whether the unidentified reviewer concurs in Towers' opinions, but he does defend Hume's treatment of the House of Tudor. One of the most common and material

objections to Hume's History was that he had over-represented the despotism of the Tudors in order to extenuate the conduct of the Stuarts. But the review defends Hume's position on the grounds that "the English Constitution was far from being rightly poised in those ages" and that the facts show that "the prerogatives of the crown were then frequently asserted in measures which seem inconsistent with a regard to public freedom, as the latter has since been ascertained." In addition, it is argued that "a degree of authority much superior to what is vested at present in the crown" had to be assumed by the executive power "before the privileges of the people were fixed with greater precision." On these grounds, the reviewer believes that objections to Hume's account of the pre-Civil War period have no real basis.⁵⁶

The extent of the Gentleman's Magazine's coverage of Hume as an historian is three letters to "Mr. Urban," a copy of a letter from Horace Walpole, an open letter to the people of Great Britain, and a review of a book called Advice on the Study and Practice of the Law. An anonymous letter in the July, 1785, issue of the journal asks the question, "What obligations have we to the house of Stuart?" The writer also has a proposal:

Let any sensible, dispassionate man, divesting himself of prejudice against presbyterians and republicans, review the Stuart reigns with an impartiality and candour greater than Harris, Hume, or Macaulay possess, and tell us, wherein consist the merits of their administrations, or what blessings we owe to them, except that oppression, which maketh wise men mad, taught or ought to teach us the true value of liberty; and, then let him, draw a fair comparison between them and the princes of the houses of Orange or Brunswick, and apply it to the happiness of our present enjoyments.⁵⁷

An unsigned letter in the September, 1785, issue, responding to the question raised by the previous correspondent, takes it for granted that the questioner presumes no obligation "to that cursed race, not one of whom appears to have possessed talents to do any good for themselves or those over whom they were placed by Providence to govern." This correspondent cites as a case in point James the First's pardoning of the principal agent, Carr, in

the Overbury affair after having sworn never to spare any of the guilty by the curse of God on himself and his posterity. "What credit," he asks, "is due to an historian, who, after these facts, summing up his character, shall dare to assert his intentions were just? which Hume does." The letter is anonymous, but it concludes with an identification of the writer as "one who sincerely loves and honours the constitution of his country both in church and state, and is no papist, no presbyterian, no republican."⁵⁸

We have also an account of Horace Walpole's evaluation of Hume in a letter written from Strawberry Hill, October 23, 1783, to Governor Pownall, which was published in the Gentleman's Magazine for December, 1798. The purpose of the letter is both to commend Pownall on something he had written in justification of Walpole's father and to make two objections, the first on Pownall's comparison of the elder Walpole to Sylla and the second on the charge of ingratitude on the part of the Hanovers to the Prime Minister. Pownall is commended for "justly referring the principles of liberty to the Saxon system, and imputing the corruptions of it to the Norman." In connection with this point, Walpole labels Hume a mountebank:

This was a great deal too deep for that superficial mountebank Hume to go; for, a mountebank he was. He mounted a freteau in the garb of a philosophic empiric, but dispensed no drugs but what he was authorized to vend by a royal patent, and which were full of Turkish opium. He had studied nothing relative to the English Constitution before Queen Elizabeth, and had selected her most arbitrary acts to countenance those of the Stuarts; and even hers he misrepresented; for, her worst deeds were levelled against the nobility, those of the Stuarts against the people; hers, consequently, were rather an obligation to the people; for, the most heinous part of common despotism is, that it produces a thousand despots instead of one.⁵⁹

He continues his denunciation of the historian by declaring that "the flimsy, ignorant, blundering, manner in which Hume executed the reigns preceding Henry VII is a proof of how little he had examined the history of the constitution."⁶⁰

In another letter from "Agrippa" to "Mr. Urban," published in the

July, 1789, issue, Hume is taken to task for ridiculing the glories of war and imputing the memory "of our gallant naval countrymen." The incident has to do with the destruction of the Marquis of Bajadox, viceroy of Peru, together with his wife and daughter, when the plate fleet was attacked by Captain Stayner. The writer quotes Hume as saying that

"the Marquis himself might have escaped; but seeing these unfortunate women, astonished with the danger, fall into a swoon and perish in the flames, he chose rather to die with them than to drag out a life embittered with the remembrance of these dismal scenes. Such events, which melt the tender heart of Humanity, are matter of triumph and exultation in the barbarous trade of war."

Verses are quoted from Waller memorializing the same incident, which the writer considers "more honourable to our countrymen, and, to reason from the whole tenour of British History, far more probable." If Waller's verses should appear but indifferent to the nicety of a modern ear," the writer concludes, "his celebrated reply to King Charles may be properly quoted, 'Poets never succeed so well in writing truth as in fiction.'"⁶¹

In the fourth letter of "Letters to the People of Great Britain on the Cultivation of their National History," in the Gentleman's Magazine for May, 1788, "Philistor" complains of the neglect of the period of English history before the Norman Conquest. He supposes three reasons for the neglect: the want of materials; the difficulty arising from the heptarchic division; and the influence of the philosophy of history of Lord Bolingbroke, who considered the early history of a country as useless and regarded only the modern part, beginning with Emperor Charles V, as worthy of study. It is the writer's argument, however, that the knowledge of modern history is not possible without recourse to the fountainheads in ancient events and manners.⁶² Philistor is here suggesting the basic fault which Leslie Stephen has seen in the histories of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, "an incapacity to recognise the great forces by which history is moulded, and the continuity which gives

to it a real unity."⁶³ As Mr. Stephen puts it, "the formula that 'anything may be the cause of anything else' must obviously lead to a perfunctory discharge of the duties of a philosophical historian." Hume's philosophy had taught him the moral necessity of turning to experience, but a crude interrogation of experience can reveal "only varieties of external conformation, without exhibiting the governing forces which mould the internal constitution."⁶⁴ If "anything may be the cause of anything else," it is understandable that Hume found it plausible to begin his history at random. But because Hume began his history with the Stuarts and wrote backwards, Philistor sees that the whole was discolored:

The consequence is, that he has quite mistaken the most glaring features of our constitution, and carried the despotism of the Stuarts along with him through all our history. Nor can any problem in mathematics be more certain than that it is impossible either to write or read history properly by retrogression. The knowledge of the ancient part is not only necessary in itself, but necessary to understand the modern.⁶⁵

Observing that the "modern history of Europe consists merely of wars which end in nothing, and in the filthy chicane of politics, so disgusting to every ingenuous mind," the writer believes that "the period of great events begins at the fall of the Roman empire, and lasts till the eleventh century." He notes that the history of England falls into two periods: the first of about seven centuries from the arrival of the Saxons to the Conquest, and the second of about seven centuries from the Conquest to the present. Whereas Greek or Roman historians would have devoted equal words to each, such is the disparity of modern history that only half a volume is given to the pre-Conquest era while the latter fills seven and a half.⁶⁶

The Gentleman's Magazine for June, 1815, reviews with approval a book by William Wright titled Advice on the Study and Practice of the Law. The book is addressed to attorneys' clerks, but the reviewer believes that young men of any profession would benefit from it. Singled out for special

attention is a chapter "On the Study of History," where the young men are cautioned against the two celebrated historians, Hume and Gibbon. Care is admonished for the perusal of their works lest their imposing style and deistical observations "ingraft on the mind sentiments repugnant to the interests of mankind, and the dictates of true religion." Wright admits that the works contain much useful knowledge but argues that though the errors are not numerous, they are important and "likely to escape detection by a tyro." There is then a flat recommendation that Henry's History of Great Britain and Andrews' continuation of it should be read instead of Hume's, and that Gibbon should be postponed until the student has become mature enough and has more leisure to examine it properly.⁶⁷

A great deal of attention is devoted by the Edinburgh Review in the early nineteenth century to Hume's political theories and, in particular, to his attitude to the Stuarts. The discussion begins with a review of a work by John Millar titled An Historical View of the English Government, from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain, to the Revolution in 1688, which is interpreted as a formal answer to Hume's historical position.⁶⁸ The review indicates that a certain levelling-off had been reached with Hume's admission that Charles I was guilty of many arbitrary things and with his explanation that he "only apologises for him on the ground of his hereditary prejudices, the necessity of his situation, and the distrust which was naturally inspired by the increasing boldness and exaction of his Parliament." There is concession also in Millar's acknowledgment that "the Parliament ultimately carried their precaution and their vengeance a little too far; that their patriotism was tainted with fanaticism; that their republicanism was not seconded by the voice of the nation; and that it paved the way for the usurpation and military despotism of the protector." It is the judgment of the reviewer, nevertheless, that both historians have given

their facts "that disposition and arrangement that is calculated to favour their party." The review sides with Millar on the points that the Constitution of England was a limited monarchy and "that the government of England was always considered as distinct from the absolute monarchies that existed over the greater part of the continent." Although Hume is charged by the reviewer with aggravating "the absurdities of the puritanical leaders of that age" and omitting "no opportunity to hold up the fanaticism of the Parliament itself to derision," he claims that Millar, at the same time, has ascribed to Parliament "a far more unmixed and liberal spirit of patriotism, than they really appear to have possessed." As to the difficult question of what proportion of Parliament's acts were due to their "impatience of civil oppression" and what to "their religious discontents," the reviewer appears to take the side of Hume in entertaining no doubts that the religious question played a very important part.⁶⁹

To many people Hume's political philosophy implied an indifference to liberty because of abhorrence of civil revolutions. This is one of the charges of a book written by Charles Fox, A History of the early Part of James the Second, which was reviewed in the Edinburgh Review for July, 1808. The book criticizes those "speculative doctrines" which question the "real value of liberty, and the illusions by which men are carried away who fancy themselves acting on the principle of patriotism." According to such speculative theories, private happiness is said to have "but little dependence on the nature of government":

The oppressions of monarchs and demagogues are nearly equal in degree, though a little different in form; and the only thing certain is, that in flying from the one, we shall fall into the other, and suffer tremendously in the transition. If ambitions and great activity therefore be not necessary to our happiness, we shall do wisely to occupy ourselves with the many innocent and pleasing pursuits that are allowed under all governments, instead of spreading tumult and discontent, by endeavouring to realize some political conceit of our own imagination.⁷⁰

Fox blames Hume as "chiefly responsible for the prevalence of this Epicurean and ignoble strain of sentiment in this country, --an author from whose dispositions and understanding, a very different doctrine might have been anticipated." In a footnote at this point the Edinburgh reviewer also finds it unaccountable and absurd that Hume should have sided with "high church and high monarchy men." The preposterous arguments of the jus divinum theory would seem naturally to conflict with Hume's "unrivalled sagacity," as the subjection of "the enjoyments of thousands to the caprice of one unfeeling individual" would seem to jar with the philosopher's "natural benevolence." Fox's position is that the persons and properties of individuals can be secured in no other way but by political freedom, and even "the consciousness of independence is a great enjoyment in itself," and "without it, all the powers of the mind, and all the capacities of happiness, are gradually blunted and destroyed."⁷¹

In 1810 circulation in France of a pamphlet amounting to a panegyric on despotism caused the Edinburgh Review in February, 1811, to remark that "if Bonaparte has hitherto played the hypocrite, it must be allowed that his agents now speak plain."⁷² The pamphlet Sur la Souveraineté, was written by M. J. Chas, Ancien Jurisconsulté. Its importance was that it favorably compared a simple despotic government with all other simple and complex forms and particularly with the mixed form exemplified in Great Britain. The pamphlet gives the Review an opportunity to recall Hume's defense of Charles the First, a summary of which follows:

Yet, of this Sovereign, who wanted only the support of a military force to have declared himself absolute, Hume, while questioning the purity of Hamden's virtue, does not scruple to say-- "If his conduct was derived in a great measure from necessity, and from a natural desire of defending that prerogative which was transmitted to him from his ancestors, and which his Parliaments were visibly encroaching on; there is no reason why he may not be esteemed a very virtuous prince, and entirely worthy of trust from his people." Notwithstanding his arbitrary levying of ship-money, --notwithstanding his forced loans, --all the

severities of his Star-Chamber, --his arbitrary imprisonments without trial, and even of members of Parliament for freedom of speech in the House, --the illustrious writer goes on to declare, that "the grievances under which the nation laboured, when considered in themselves, without regard to the constitution, scarcely deserve the name." --"Peace," he adds, in a laboured panegyric, "industry, commerce, opulence; nay, even justice and lenity of administration, notwithstanding some very few exceptions: all these were enjoyed by the people, and every other blessing of government -- EXCEPT LIBERTY."⁷³

The review of the panegyric on despotism concludes with the idea that conceptions of popular tendencies to throw off the yoke of government are much exaggerated. Except for very extraordinary circumstances, the reviewer argues, the tendency is just the opposite. To prove his point, he quotes from no other source but Hume himself, in the opening of the fifty-third chapter of his History. Hume's observation is made "after the trial of Hampden, which had so wonderfully tended to inflame the nation, -- and after all the precedents of arbitrary government, which had been not only witnessed but resisted":

"Tho' it was justly apprehended that such precedents, if patiently submitted to, would end in a total disuse of parliaments, and in the establishment of arbitrary authority; Charles dreaded no opposition from the people, who are not commonly much affected with consequences, and require some striking motive to engage them in a resistance of established government. . . . General rebellions and revolts of an whole people never were encouraged, now, or at any time. They are always provoked."⁷⁴

A statement such as this, admitting as it does the submissiveness of people to government, appears to be an example of Hume's inconsistency in view of his vigorous defense of the Stuarts on the basis of what he assumes to be the unjustifiable demands of the people.

In an age when the revolutionary spirit was sweeping the Continent, the Whig defendants of civil liberty in England stressed the fact that a people has to be long and carefully trained for freedom. A proper balance has to be achieved between established authority and the civil liberties of the people, and this balance is dependent upon the opinion of the people at any

given time. This is the essence of a review in the Edinburgh Review for September, 1814, of the book Teoria de las Cortes, ó Grandes Juntas Nacionales de los Reinos de Leon y Castilla, written by El Ciudadano Don Francisco Martinez Marina and Canonigo de la Iglesia de San Isidro de Madrid.⁷⁵ In the process of discussing the Spaniards' incapacity for liberty, the reviewer postulates some political principles which clearly reflect the influence of Burke. The remarks, however, are prefaced by an unqualified subscription to Hume's doctrine that "every people, not absolutely subdued by foreign force, must be governed by opinion; or, if the admirers of Mr. Paine object to that word, by prejudice." The basis of government is said to exist not in a social contract or in divine right, but rather in "the general consent and tacit agreement of the people, as at the moment subsisting." The reviewer is careful not to conclude, however, that "because power is derived from the people, that all governments in which they do not reserve a portion for themselves, are illegitimate." His argument is that a people can as easily bestow the power of taxation on one hereditary ruler "as to five hundred, renewed every seven years." "The supreme governor," he goes on to say, "may gain his situation by address; --but he can only keep it by a conformity to the habits and manners of the people who live under him." The reviewer's antagonism to revolutionary principles is reflected in his opinion that "improvement must be gradual." On this basis, he believes it impossible that the people of Spain should be able to pass at once "to the comprehension of Locke and Rousseau." It is necessary that there be years of inquiry led by "great captains in philosophy" before the speculative opinions of men can be changed. He then proceeds to list several qualities which are essential to men who would be permanently free. In the first place, "they must have a spirit of exertion, --not for sudden efforts, but for a constant struggle against the abuses which lead to despotism." Secondly, the principles of justice must be "generally understood and impartially administered in the tribunals," and justice, furthermore, must

have the support of public opinion. A third important quality is moderation, which is described as "the tie which keeps together the discordant members of our Legislature, —which prevents the Commons from insisting on a democracy, the Lords on an aristocracy, and the King on an absolute monarchy," in other words, "the temper by which they perceive the hopelessness of such objects." The fundamental error of inexperience and intemperance is "to press a general theorem at the risk of losing a practical advantage," and "to inculcate an alarming doctrine which prevents the success of a salutary measure." The difficulty of any newly established government is that, while "the old system must have many secret friends in the selfish, the prejudiced, and the indolent," and new leaders blunder in their inexperience, they are lacking "that solemn and habitual respect which is the best bulwark of a government." The language of the Tory Hume is quoted to underscore the last point: "The sacred boundaries of the laws being once violated, nothing remains to confine the wild projects of zeal and ambition; and every successive revolution becomes a precedent for that which follows."⁷⁶ Thus, two of Hume's theories, that a people must be governed by opinion and that the boundaries of law are sacrosanct, are invoked to support a balance between established authority and civil liberty.

The political philosophy of David Hume is further analyzed in the Edinburgh Review in connection with the reviews of two other histories of England. George Brodie's A History of the British Empire, from the Accession of Charles I to the Restoration was published in 1822, and John Lingard's A History of England, from the first Invasion to the Romans was published in 1823. Reference will be made first to Lingard's History, which was reviewed in the Edinburgh Review for April, 1825. The tone of the review is conciliatory toward Hume, whose humanitarianism is shown to eclipse that of Lingard. Whereas the indignation of Hume is aroused by "a scene of cruelty,

hypocrisy, or injustice," Lingard's humanity is depicted as "apt to slumber where none but laymen suffer; and his indignation against oppression is seldom warm, unless when churchmen are wronged." Thus, if Hume is "accused of a childish partiality for Kings," Lingard is guilty of worshipping "a more jealous idol--the Church." The reviewer frankly apologizes for Hume, differentiating the philosopher as he appeared in his temperament and as he was in his speculative tendencies. Although it is admitted that "the general tenor of his History of England is unfavourable to the popular party in our Constitution," the reviewer states that he has always assumed that "Mr. Hume was in reality an admirer of popular government in preference to monarchy." The explanation is to be found in Hume's temper, disposition, and character. Being averse to violence and turbulence, Hume "was always inclined [in civil contests] to side with the party that seemed to him to be acting on the defensive." In spite of this disposition of Hume to take the part of the Crown, the reviewer argues that "no historian had a stronger sense than Mr. Hume of the benefits of civil liberty." He says that Hume is never an apostate from the principles of liberty even when he appears to deviate from the cause of liberty and that "he uniformly treats with scorn and indignation the palliations for cruelty and injustice, whether urged by laymen or churchmen, by kings or demagogues." Without attempting to vindicate Hume's history of the Stuarts and without intending to excuse but rather to explain the historian's partiality to them, the reviewer gives two reasons for Hume's hated political position. First of all, he had received from his youthful education "a strong tincture of Jacobitism," a bias which later "led him, in his pity for the misfortunes of the Stuarts, to extenuate their guilt." The second reason is that he had encountered an early opposition and narrowly escaped prosecution "from the sour and intolerant bigotry of the Calvinistic Clergy, that indisposed him to a party of which they had been the champions and supporters." The reviewer's concluding observation about Hume's attitude to political liberty is

concise and perceptive: "But, setting aside his errors from prejudice and education, his great defect as a friend of liberty and popular government seems to have been a morbid horror of whatever tended to disturb for a time the peace and order of society."⁷⁷

George Brodie's publication in 1822 of his four volume A History of the British Empire, from the Accession of Charles I to the Restoration, including a "particular Examination of Mr. Hume's Statements relative to the Character of the English Government," was the most ambitious attempt to demerit Hume as an historian. This production was highly praised by the Edinburgh Review; its March, 1824, issue devotes fifty-five pages to a summary and evaluation.⁷⁸ The work is identified as that of "a resolute, learned, and industrious Whig" and is considered by the periodical to be "the most valuable contribution to the constitutional history of our country that has appeared since the commencement of our labours." Brodie is praised for compiling his history on "the principle of taking no fact on the credit of any recent historian without the strictest examination of his authorities, and admitting no questionable opinion, without the freest and most fearless discussion of the grounds on which it rests."⁷⁹ The particular object, of course, to which such discipline is directed, is Hume; and the result of this effort, in the opinion of the Edinburgh Review, will be that Hume's "credit among historians, for correctness of assertion, will soon be nearly as low as it has long been with theologians for orthodoxy of belief." The reviewer sees the possibility of the work doing much good in counteracting "the many bad effects which the unlucky, though in many respects well merited, popularity of Mr. Hume's work has had on the public mind." While the practical Toryism of personal servility to the Government is accredited to self interest, the reviewer calls attention to a speculative and sincere Toryism, the existence of which he liberally admits and whose source he traces to the effects of Hume's history on the public. Further comments reveal both the great popularity of Hume's History and the

delusive effects of its exceptional literary merits:

It is stated that . . . we have really very little doubt that both the prejudices which infect the few genuine Tories of the present day, and the apologies by which the crowds who care nothing either for prejudice or principle, are enabled to make a plausible defence for their conduct, may be justly ascribed to the impression which the artful colouring and delusive reasonings of that book have made on public opinion—an impression which the excellence of the writing, the acuteness of the observations, and the apparent fairness of the deductions, have all tended powerfully to confirm. We are aware that to many practical politicians it may appear fantastic and even ridiculous to ascribe such effects to a book—and especially to a book in four quarto volumes, published near seventy years ago: But when it is considered how universally, and at how early an age, it has been read, especially during the latter half of that period—how pleasant it is to read, and how easy to understand and remember—how much clearer, in short, and concise and comprehensive it is than any other history of equal extent—how reasonable and sagacious are the greatest part of the observations it contains—and how plausible the most erroneous of its conclusions,—nay even how just, upon the premises of fact which it assumes, while so very few of its readers can be supposed to have either leisure or inclination to inquire into the truth of these assumptions, —our readers will cease perhaps to wonder at the influence we have ventured to ascribe to it, and acknowledge that principles which fall in with so many of the baser parts of our nature, may be promoted almost as much by artful apologies as by present and actual temptation.⁸⁰

Hume's historical errors are traced by the reviewer to sources in the historian's intellect, character, and historical method. His intellect is described as being "too active and original to submit, with sufficient patience, to the preparatory toils and long suspended judgment of an historian; and led him to form premature conclusions and precipitate theories, which it then became the pride of his ingenuity to justify." While his personal character was "eminently kind and cheerful," it was at the same time "remarkably averse from all sorts of enthusiasm or strong emotion, and even somewhat indolent and timid." Thus, it was by nature disposed to quiet submission to established authority rather than to questioning and resistance.⁸¹ The other source of Hume's historical errors is traced to the plan of his history, which is "far more comprehensive and ambitious" than the older and simpler plan of history conceived as a narrative. The plan which Hume followed required "a selection of the facts most worthy to be recorded," the abridgment of some facts, and a lengthy

treatment of others. In addition, historians who follow this method evaluate the acts and actors of history, trace important events "back to their causes and forward to their consequences," and in so doing furnish "a satisfactory theory of their connexion and mutual dependency."⁸² It is only logical that as records accumulate, concentrated and digested views of history such as Hume's become indispensable, and thus he has antiquated such historians as Holinshed, Speed, and Eachard in England. But, in pointing out the attraction of this kind of history, the reviewer also underscores the hazards involved:

When the business of the historian is no longer merely to make his readers acquainted with the facts he has ascertained, as they really occurred in past time, but also to furnish him with the opinions and moral impressions to which they should give rise, it is plain that he has it in his power, in most cases, to give any colour his own prejudices and passions may suggest, to every delicate or important transaction he records; and thus to dictate to posterity, with almost absolute authority, the sentiments they should entertain of their ancestors. . . . He will not only lend all the colours of his style to enhance the merits, and palliate the crimes of his favourites, and to aggravate those of their opponents, but he will slur and abridge in his narrative the facts which it gives him pain to record, while he expatiates with graphic and circumstantial accuracy on those which seem to lend a triumph to his peculiar opinions. He will, perhaps unconsciously, be careless and negligent in investigating the details which tend to discredit the theories to which he is partial, and collect with malicious industry all the scattered intimations which seem to support them.⁸³

The danger to the public, then, exists in the fact that it easily follows a history where the narrative is elegant and flowing and enlivened by witty sarcasms, "brilliant explanations, and artful remarks"; and with such a public the historian whose business it is to point out exaggerations, detect inaccuracies, and supply omissions has tough sledding.⁸⁴ The two main objections to Hume's historical theories, that of the conception of the monarchy before the Stuarts as absolute and that of attributing the agitation against authority to religious bigotry, are outlined in the reviewer's understanding of Hume's thesis:

It may now fairly be said, we think, to be the main scope and object of Mr. Hume's history to show, that the English government,

before the accession of the Stuarts, was an arbitrary and absolute monarchy; and that, though the Barons, in rude feudal times, asserted a barbarous and rebellious sort of independence, the body of the people had as little notion of liberty as in Turkey, or any of the Asiatic despotisms--that at this era the people encroached on the settled prerogative of the sovereign, and not the sovereign on the liberties of the people--that this new and audacious questioning of authority arose neither from any sense of actual oppression, nor any speculative ideas of fitness and justice, but from the fermentation of religious zeal and bigotry, by which the whole proceedings of the pretended patriots were actuated, and their notions debased--that the sovereigns, and especially the unfortunate Charles, made, though with natural reluctance, all reasonable concessions, and having, with perfect good faith, divested themselves of the power to do mischief, were trampled upon by the usurping Commons, and overwhelmed, with all the known principles of order and authority, under the ruins of the monarchy and old constitution of the country,--from which they were at last revived, with the universal assent of the nation, at the Restoration, though again cast down, with less violence, by the same great agent of religious antipathy, at the Revolution.⁸⁵

Although the review disagrees with Brodie in some details, his interpretation of the facts is cited at length to prove Hume's inconsistencies and, indeed, to conclude that his history "contains more irreconcilable opinions, and . . . more contradictory representations and sentiments, than are to be found in any historical work in existence." Strong exception is also taken to Hume's theory that fanaticism or religious bigotry was the true source of the political agitation:

An insane horror of Popery--a ludicrous antipathy to certain vestments and ceremonials of worship, are everywhere represented by him as the true causes of that pretended zeal for liberty which was the source of so many disorders; and all the resources of his pen are employed to darken and degrade the characters of the parliamentary leaders by the imputation of these vulgar and unphilosophical propensities.⁸⁶

Contradicting this interpretation, the review argues that "there never was an era in the history of the world where the leaders of a popular body were so little the dupes of their own passions or those of their followers--where the spirit of reformation was so uniformly tempered by respect to precedent and authority, or where sober judgment and patient research were so largely blended with national zeal and individual genius and courage."⁸⁷ The most

reprehensible passage in Hume's whole work, in the opinion of the reviewer, is that in which he observes that Charles the First's government was "more gentle and equitable than that of most of his predecessors" and that those who suffered severities could have "escaped them by submission." "What else," the reviewer asks, "but submission, does any tyrant in modern times propose to himself by his severities? and what was the submission required in the case at issue, but submission to a government of will, in place of a government of law?"⁸⁸

Henry Neele's The Romance of History, a study of historical writing, was published in London in 1828 and reviewed in the Edinburgh Review for May of that year.⁸⁹ Neele's comparison of modern and ancient historians echoes what was so often stated in these journals, that Hume used facts unfairly to support his own prejudices. Neele evaluates modern historians and those of antiquity on the basis of the roles played by imagination and reason in historical writing. "The historians of our own country," he states, "are unequalled in depth and precision of reason"; but the faults of modern historians are so closely allied with this merit of reason that he wonders "whether, on the whole, this department of literature has gained or lost during the last two-and-twenty centuries." A writer such as Herodotus may have been seduced from truth by his imagination; but modern historians, according to Neele, have been seduced from truth by their reason:

They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles.⁹⁰

Religious and Philosophical Views

The earliest criticism of the religious position of Hume amongst the periodicals here being considered seems to be the Monthly Review's evaluation in 1755 of the first volume of Hume's History; but the most detailed examination of his views occurs in connection with "The Natural History of

Religion," one of the Four Dissertations published in 1757, and the posthumous publication in 1779 of the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, both of which were covered by the Monthly Review and Critical Review shortly after publication. The Life of David Hume also provided an opportunity for the expression of opinion about Hume's religious views. In the Gentleman's Magazine this opinion takes on the characteristics of the Warburtonian school of criticism which championed the cause of revealed religion. The other two journals, however, and particularly the Edinburgh Review in the next century, criticize Hume more or less on deistic grounds.

In discussing the first volume of Hume's History, the Monthly Review complains about the singularity of the historian's views of religion:

He seems to be of the opinion, that there are but two species of it in all nature, superstition and fanaticism; and under one or other of these, he gives us to understand, the whole of the christian profession is, and ever was, included. His treatment, indeed, of every denomination of christians, to speak the most favorably, is far from being such as becomes a gentleman, and may, we apprehend, prejudice his reputation even as a historian, in the opinion of many intelligent and considerate readers.⁹¹

Two years later, however, in a more favorable review of the second historical work, Hume is quoted in a self-vindication of what he had formerly written about religion:

"The proper office of religion, is, to reform mens lives, to purify their hearts, to enforce all moral duties, and to secure obedience to the laws and civil Magistrate. While it pursues these salutary purposes, its operations, tho' infinitely valuable, are secret and silent, and seldom come under the cognizance of history. That adulterate species of it alone, which inflames faction, animates sedition, and prompts rebellions, distinguishes itself on the open theatre of the world, and is the great source of revolutions and public convulsions. The Historian, therefore, has scarce occasion to mention any other kind of religion; and he may retain the highest regard for true piety, even while he exposes all the abuses of the false."⁹²

This explanation would seem to have satisfied Mr. Rose, the reviewer; but in his concluding remarks he insists on a more formal expression of religious sentiment, noting that "as to religion, in general, and the different

professions of Christianity, in particular, . . . [Hume] is far from appearing to have too zealous an attachment to any."⁹³

If at this time the Monthly Review had thought of Hume's religious speculations as unbecoming a gentleman, it becomes more alarmed in its review of the Four Dissertations in February, 1757. Mr. Rose comments that "in his attacks upon the religion of his country, . . . [Hume] acts not the part of an open and generous enemy, but endeavors to weaken its authority by oblique hints, and artful insinuations." And with a certain spitefulness, Rose concludes that "few Readers, of just discernment . . . will envy him any honours his acuteness, or elegance, can possibly obtain, when they are only employed in filling the mind with the uncomfortable fluctuations of scepticism, and the gloom of infidelity."⁹⁴

The alarm intensifies in the periodical's November, 1779, review of the Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. The review points out some inconsistencies in the argument of Cleanthes; but what is more important, its conclusion points up the implications of Hume's doctrines:

If the principles which he has labored with so much zeal and earnestness to establish be true, the wicked are set free from every restraint but that of laws; the virtuous are robbed of their most substantial comforts; every generous ardor of the human mind, is damped; the world we live in is a fatherless world; we are chained down to a life full of wretchedness and misery; and we have no hope beyond the grave.⁹⁵

Since Hume "had been long floating on the boundless and pathless ocean of scepticism," the reviewer imagines that the philosopher "in the evening of his day . . . would have been desirous of getting into some peaceful harbour." But he concedes that Hume's "love of paradox, his inordinate pursuit of literary fame, continued, whilst life continued"; and he believes this to be the philosopher's only motive "for publishing what must shock the sense and virtue of his fellow-mortals" and the only means by which the essay could be reconciled "with the character of a good citizen, and a friend to mankind." Hume's claim to benevolence and amiability is freely acknowledged

and praised, but it is denied that this infers "that principles have little or no effect on human conduct." Hume has apparently assumed, according to the reviewer, that the temperament which was his by fortune, so to speak, was possible to all:

A man, who is naturally of a cool dispassionate turn of mind; of a studious disposition; whose education, fortune, and other accidental circumstances connect him with the upper ranks of life, may not only have fashionable manners, be an agreeable companion, but may, by the manner of natural temper, be a benevolent, good-humoured man, and act his part in life with great decency. But suppose that Mr. Hume's principles are let loose among mankind, and generally adopted, what will then be the consequences. Their language will be, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. When men are once led to believe that death puts a final period to their existence, and are set free from the idea of their being accountable creatures, what is left to restrain them from the gratification of their passions but the authority of the laws?⁹⁶

Even the best laws, however, are "far from being sufficient to prevent many of those evils which break in upon the peace, order, and welfare of society." The review ends with the observations that the "Dialogues cannot possibly hurt any man of a philosophic turn, or, indeed, any man of common sense," but that "they may serve, indeed, to confirm the giddy, the profligate, and the unprincipled in their prejudice against religion and virtue." A "virtuous father" can only recommend them to a son on points of composition, "and every impartial judge must pronounce them unworthy of a writer of such distinguished abilities as Mr. Hume."⁹⁷

The Critical Review is keenly appreciative of the literary merits of the philosopher, but at the same time Hume's literary subtleties evoke a cautionary attitude in the periodical. It expresses a fearless trust in reason, however, to overcome whatever dangers may be inherent in the philosopher's religious and philosophical views. Preliminary attention is given to Hume's religious views in an uncritical account in the April, 1756, issue of a work by John Leland on the deistical writers titled "A Supplement to the first and second volumes of the View of the Deistical Writers . . . in several letters to a friend." Editorial opinion is withheld, but quotations are given

from several of Leland's letters to a friend expressing religious reservations about Mr. Hume. With reference to Hume's philosophical essays, for example, Leland writes that "upon a close examination of them I think one may venture to pronounce, that few authors can be mentioned who have fallen into greater absurdities and inconsistencies." He wishes, too, that there were no grounds for his friend's judgment that Hume had uncovered "a bad heart" by casting such "bitter sneers against the Christian revelation."⁹⁸ The fourth letter dismisses the subject of Hume with the observation that he will scarcely "be charged with the fault of having carried humility to an excess." He regrets, too, that the foundation Mr. Hume laid "for acquiring the praise he seems so fond of" was not employed "in serving and promoting the excellent cause of religion" rather than "in endeavouring to weaken and expose it."⁹⁹

Comments of the Critical Review are directed in particular to Hume's "The Natural History of Religion" and the Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. The cautionary formula is invoked in the February, 1757, issue of the journal in connection with its review of the Four Dissertations, particularly with regard to "The Natural History of Religion," of which it remarks that it cannot be perceived "quo tendit, to what use or purpose this dissertation was written."¹⁰⁰ In April, 1757, there is a reference to a pamphlet on the subject of this essay which is addressed to Dr. Warburton and which contains "severe strictures on Mr. David Hume." This is simply a notice of publication, and no comment is made except to note that the writer seems to be intimately acquainted with Warburton's works.¹⁰¹ Reference has already been made to another independent criticism of this work of Hume, written by "S. T." and titled Remarks upon the Natural History of Religion. . . . The Critical Review examined this work in November, 1758, and, while not defending Hume's politics or morality, wrote of his blemishes as merely venial and rather stimulating to the intellectual faculty. Hume's maxims, however, are described

as more suited to "the closet" than to actual life.¹⁰² This journal ignores Hume's autobiographical pamphlet, but shortly after it was published an unidentified writer wrote An Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume, which is briefly mentioned in the April, 1777, issue. The apology is frankly described as "a piece of literary patch-work, without beginning, middle, or end, . . . which owes its existence to the present popularity of the subject," and the author is pictured as "a complete master of those necessary implements in modern book-making, a pair of scissors and a paste-brush."¹⁰³

With its review of the Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, the Critical Review appears to be caught in a kind of dilemma.¹⁰⁴ Reflecting a rationalistic theology, it approves of Hume's methods but vigorously opposes his conclusions. In an obvious slur at the Warburtonian apologists, the review begins by observing that readers will not be disappointed in seeking "in these Dialogues the profoundest researches, and the most acute reasoning, in opposition to some of the leading articles of our popular divinity." It is confidently asserted that "neither the friends of religion have any occasion to be alarmed, nor either enemies to triumph" because of this work. The reasons, of course, are that "freedom of inquiry can never be injurious to the cause of truth," and that "in spite of all the arts of sophistry, the secret whispers of reason will be heard and regarded by every calm and impartial enquirer. . . ."¹⁰⁵ Near the end of the article, nevertheless, the reviewer does sound the alarm. Revealing his own rationalistic prejudice in religious matters, he applauds Hume's just and pathetic lament of "the fatal consequences of superstition," but he goes on to warn that "this ingenious, this sagacious, this animated writer, has inculcated those principles, which are much more pernicious, and which, if they were to prevail in their full force, would throw a gloom over the whole creation, and really terminate in the blind amazement, the diffidence and melancholy of mankind." The reviewer is especially critical of the spirit in which Philo (apparently identified

with Hume) is presented in the Dialogues. He complains that Philo's arguments are not presented with modesty and that Cleanthes' (the deist's) answers are not so fully developed as they might have been. Because of the fact that Philo advances his views with "an air of triumph and defiance," the reviewer concludes that the work takes on "the aspect of infidelity."¹⁰⁶ After its review of the Dialogues, the Critical Review ceases to devote attention to Hume, other than (January, 1786) to dispense with the pamphlet Two Letters to David Hume as "a few trite observations on the nature and tendency of Mr. Hume's moral principles, expressed in the usual style of the Quakers."¹⁰⁷

The Gentleman's Magazine did not become much concerned with Hume until after his death when his influence had become generally recognized. Prior to 1777, for example, there are only notices of Hume's publications, such as the Essays Moral and Political in 1748, An enquiry concerning the principles of morals in 1751, and the Tudor volumes of the History of England in 1759. But following its summary of the Life of David Hume in March, 1777,¹⁰⁸ the pages of this journal are devoted more and more to the subject of Hume. An Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume, which appeared in 1777, inspired some "observations" by a correspondent or editor who signed himself "Laicus."¹⁰⁹ In its notice of publication in the "List of Books" section, the magazine waives discussion of the Apology for the same reason given by Laicus, who wrote that "it would be a tedious and disagreeable task to unravel the whole of this 'Apology,' designedly perplexed with studied obscurity, incoherent, and frequently inconsistent with itself."¹¹⁰ The author of the Apology is not indicated in the publication notice, but since a casual reference is made to a Mr. Melmoth in the magazine's review of the Supplement to the Life of David Hume in the same issue, it can be assumed that he is the author.¹¹¹ In a footnote to his letter, Laicus expresses astonishment "that the same author who so severely treats

religious hypocrisy, as he is pleased to call it, should at the same time give birth to works of such a different cast, as 'the Apology' and 'the Sublime and Beautiful of Scripture.'" In a parenthetical addition, the editor of the Gentleman's Magazine suggests that the "correspondent's astonishment will surely cease when he reflects that Mr. Melmoth admires the books of Scripture rather as elegant compositions, or moral lessons, in the same manner as he would admire Homer or Virgil, or any heathen author, than as inspired writings, and evidently stamped by the seal of the Almighty."¹¹²

This comment can perhaps be interpreted as a sign of the orthodoxy of the editor. The purpose of Laicus's article is to reply to a particularly offensive appendage to Melmoth's Apology. Apparently an unidentified "Christian apologist" had written a letter to Adam Smith in response to his remarks on the death of Hume, and Melmoth in turn wrote an answer to the Christian's letter which he added to the Apology under the title of an "Address to One of the People called Christians, by way of reply to his Letter to Dr. Adam Smith." But before Laicus proceeds to list the "Observations" in answer to Melmoth's "Address," he makes a judgment on the Apology itself. He states that "unless Hume is happy enough to find a better Apologist, he must inevitably sink into disrepute; or rather, I should say, if Hume's writings do not apologize for themselves, this author will not be found of sufficient abilities to plead his cause." The correspondent likewise confesses his own inability to apologize for the "Letter" to Dr. Smith, stating that his "design is only to vindicate it by exposing the weakness of . . . Melmoth's objections" and that his observations are only "an humble endeavour to wipe away the stains he throws on it, which may deform, but will never deface it." There is also a further modest confession that the correspondent is resorting to the medium of the Gentleman's Magazine because he fears he may be accused of giving his own remarks too much honor by issuing them

formally from the press. The "Christian" writer of the letter to Dr. Smith is not identified, but Laicus claims an acquaintance with his "pacific disposition" and testifies that his life and writings demonstrate "the milk of human kindness." The letter to Smith has apparently demonstrated to Laicus, too, the literary abilities of this man; for in imagination, genius and rhetorical ornament the "brief, but poignant Letter" is judged superior to the Apology. Since "the taste of the present times seems chiefly to favour the beauties of composition, and attend particularly to the elegance of language," Laicus is inclined to hope that the letter "will be more read and admired than the Apology." The "Observations" discuss several aspects of Melmoth's defense of Hume, but Laicus is most concerned to combat the aspersions cast on the morality and philosophical integrity of the orthodox and to challenge Melmoth's contentions that Hume actually favored religion and that the philosopher's arguments might just as easily be approved by God as those of the orthodox. Melmoth had used as his "text" a couplet from Epistle III of Pope's "Essay on Man":

For modes of Faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong, whose LIFE is in the right.

And Laicus comments on the ease by which these lines "may be transformed into orthodoxy." He is aware that the poet "affected to the church of England"; but because "the age is very fond of taking affront," the very motto of the lines amounts to a call to arms by the orthodox to "require satisfaction."¹¹³ With reference to the "Letter," Melmoth had complained of the "rancour, spleen, and uncharitableness" of its author. Laicus will hardly concede this; but even so, he argues, such a tone would be justified on the basis that "the importance of the cause demands the sharpest weapons," even were it to be proved that the writer is "of the Holy Order," and "paid for fighting," to use the language of those who oppose the reverends. Being personally unacquainted with Hume, Laicus will not vouch for "the glorious virtues of

good-nature, compassion, generosity, [and] charity" said to have been displayed in his actions; but he proceeds to make a defense against "the modern deriders of those unfortunate clergymen whose lives are not suitable to their profession." He sees no difference, in fact, between those clergymen who are said to disgrace good doctrines and precepts by their lives and Hume who "disgraced a good life by his pernicious tenets and doctrines." A contradiction is admitted in both propositions; but in the final analysis Laicus is "more disposed to pity the infirmities of nature, than pardon the voluntary productions of a sceptical imagination." Special exception is taken to Melmoth's "effrontery" in saying that "no book has been written that has impaired Hume's philosophical reputation." He cites Dr. Beattie's "Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Scepticism and Sophistry," Dr. Campbell's "Essay on Miracles," works by Dr. Adams and Bishop Pearce, and Dr. Leland's "View of Deistical Writers," as examples of "learned treatises that have been written against Mr. Hume's tenets." Melmoth had stated that a philosophic reputation is maintained only among philosophers and had called Beattie's book "a philosophy calculated only for ladies and fine gentlemen." Laicus wonders that he could concede that it was at least a philosophy; but he raises the question, who is to arbitrate what constitutes philosophy? "Is deism and free-thinking, alone, to be the standard?" he asks. And then comes an orthodox proclamation:

But, be it known, that we Christians, however we appear to the narrow view of the Free-thinker and Sceptic to be injudicious and biased; we, I say, being the greater part of mankind, do not chuse tamely to be counted fools, and men of no understanding. We have still spirit enough left among us to resent such ill-treatment as this. 'Tis the presumptuous and proud man alone, who dares to trample on those truths which the rest of the world reverence, and can sit down quietly in the assurance, that he alone is in the right, and all mankind beside in the wrong. See the elegant discourse of Bishop Atterbury, Vol. I. p. 178, on the words, "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not": in which the reasons of his failure are set down, in a manner evidently convincing; than which nothing can be more truly applicable to our present scorners.¹¹¹

The orthodox claim the gift of reason just as do the "scorners"; and if they ascribe it "to the mercy of a benign Creator" in contrast to the "chance," "power of nature" or "no cause" of the sceptics, this is no cause why they should be denied the use of it.¹¹⁵ "The brain of the sceptical philosopher, or speculative infidel," Laicus argues, "may be of a fine texture; yet we can oppose to the votaries of deism, christians, as famous in their times, as learned, as ingenious, as the supporters of such pernicious tenets":

Do they boast of a Bolingbroke, a Pope, a Hume? We can match them with an Addison, a Thompson, a Beattie: whose works will be read and admired by the greater part of Mankind in all succeeding generations; while the favourers of scepticism and infidelity shall either sink into oblivion, or at best be pointed out to be shunned as dangerous and pestilential.¹¹⁶

In answer to the apologist's claim that Hume favored religion and that "his philosophical system inculcated every thing praise-worthy," Laicus sarcastically points to suicide and adultery as two conspicuous examples of such praise-worthy things. Melmoth apparently had also doubted Hume's opinion about the mortality of the soul; but Laicus simply asserts that "a slight attempt of the impartial, much less the prejudiced christian," would discover that Hume actually believed in the mortality of the soul.¹¹⁷ In his address to the "Christian" Melmoth had also suggested that the Supreme Power could as easily approve Hume's position as that of the Christian's, to which his opponent heatedly responds:

What! approve of notions that directly tend to subvert his very existence, which plainly assure us, that, "as long as there is any evil or disorder in the universe, it is unreasonable to believe God to be infinitely wise."

Hume's apologist was shocked at the system which taught that millions who had never heard of Christ were to be condemned. Laicus's comment is that "we set no bounds to the mercy of God" and that "these objections have been long ago confuted," but he adds pointedly that "it were only to be wished that 'millions of them [alone] believed nothing about the Son.'" While not venturing

to call Melmoth an atheist, he permits himself to be uncharitable enough "to deem the Apologist a deist at least." The system which so shocked Hume and his apologist is then identified as "no other than christianity, of which St. John was the inspired propagator, and as a foundation of which this his Gospel was written." Then comes the question of authority basic to the orthodox proponents of revealed religion:

If he reckons these as furious expressions only, and rejects this book, universally received as canonical, can we imagine him to be a friend to christianity, or a christian?

The last point in the "Observations" is concerned with Melmoth's recommendation of Adam Smith's advice that the example of David Hume should be followed. Laicus objects to the justification given for this advice, that "not a syllable that proposes atheism as a cordial for low spirits, and the proper antidote against the fear of death" is to be found in Hume. On the basis of this Laicus maintains, "whoever does not propose atheism as a cordial for low spirits . . ." may require us to follow his example.¹¹⁸ With regard to Melmoth's conclusion that "David Hume's system, on account of the rectitude of his life, cannot be wrong," his critic observes that on the same principle the system of the writer of the "Christian" letter to Dr. Smith cannot be wrong, for he is prepared to give more than a bare assertion about the rightness of this man's life. Thus, Laicus feels that he has made his case to point up the dilemma of the apologist, who must either reconcile "two such opposite and contradictory systems" or join with him "in denying the premises, and looking out for a better text than the vague expression of a poet." The alternative to this would be that a criterion would have to be found for "every visionary enthusiast, or seeming sectarist, who grounds his doctrine on the rectitude of his life," and the necessary effect would be the introduction of "such more confusion, and a multiplicity of opinions more irrational and absurd, than even those of the Christian Religion are judged to be by some."¹¹⁹

The same issue of the Gentleman's Magazine reviews a publication titled Supplement to the Life of David Hume, Esq. The reviewer is not able to determine whether the author is a friend or foe to Hume, and he notes nothing new "in these meagre pages" save a few additional anecdotes. Some extra information about Hume's burial is provided, to which the reviewer adds parenthetically:

It is learned that Mr. Hume by his own desire, was buried in the Calton churchyard, in a rock wherein never man had been laid (For this gloss, however, the present writer, not Mr. Hume, we suppose, is accountable. In another place our author, in the true Heathenish style, calls this "a spot for depositing his ashes," which might lead to an idea, that, as Mr. Hume died, he had also been buried, like a Heathen.); and that his grave was watched and lighted eight nights for fear of insult.¹²⁰

There is also a reference to Hume's bequest which was to be paid to Dr. Smith upon the publication of the Dialogues on Natural Religion. The reviewer assumes these to be "the famous tracts in defence of suicide, adultery, &c. whose publication, if we are rightly informed, authority has hitherto prevented." He thinks, therefore, that Smith is "likely to lose the advantage of this bequest" apart from any scruples he might himself have about publishing them. "Without any breach of Christian charity," the reviewer concludes, "and though Mr. Malmoth, no doubt, is ready to apologize for them, most of our readers, we fancy, will concur with us in hoping that this device may never take place."¹²¹

The reviewer of the Supplement was, of course, mistaken on the nature of the content of the Dialogues concerning Natural Religion; and he must have been disappointed to see Hume's "Essay on Suicide" published in England in 1784. The Dialogues are briefly reviewed in the October, 1779, issue of the Gentleman's Magazine, where the disputants, Cleanthes, Philo, and Demea are said to be distinguished, respectively, by "an accurate and philosophical turn, . . . a careless scepticism, . . . and a rigid and inflexible orthodoxy." It is obvious to the reviewer that "this sceptical metaphysician,"

Hume, has inclined the balance to Philo; and he observes that this particular disputant in the Dialogues attacks the moral attributes of the Deity with the same weapons employed by Lord Bolingbroke that "were most ably parried by Bishop Warburton. "Who," he asks in conclusion, "that has read Cicero's de Natura Deorum, can think that the Divine Goodness required any other advocate?"¹²²

Hume's essays on suicide and the immortality of the soul were mentioned in the August, 1784, issue of the Gentleman's Magazine. It is noted that they were printed and advertised much earlier by Mr. Millar but that they were called in before the day of publication upon threat of prosecution and others substituted. Nonetheless a few copies escaped and were sold at a large price. The present editor of the essays, according to the review, seems to have thought "himself safe from prosecution by supplying this code of infidelity with what he calls 'a comment,' or 'an antidote.'" This editorial comment is evaluated as no more justifying "the vender of poison of any kind in foro legis, than in foro conscientiae," for the reason that "many who swallow the poison, will not apply the antidote, even were it much stronger than that here administered." The reviewer refrains from any kind of summary of the arguments because he wishes not to be guilty of the practice he condemns. Instead, he recommends the "antidote" of another tract, which he reports is reputed to have been written by the Dean of Canterbury.¹²³ Since this tract is called "Letters on Infidelity, by the Author of a Letter to Dr. Adam Smith," the Dean of Canterbury may have been the "Christian" whom Melmoth attacked in his appendage to his Apology for Hume. Nine letters are involved. The first three are concerned with "Remarks on the Apology for Mr. Hume's Life and Writings"; the fourth is "A Dialogue on Philosophical Scepticism," occasioned by Mr. Hume's posthumous Dialogues concerning Natural Religion; the fifth, sixth, and seventh present an "Examination of the Essay on Suicide"; and the eighth and ninth constitute an "Answer to a Pamphlet,

intituled, Doubts of the Infidels: or, Queries relative to Scriptural Inconsistencies and Contradictions, Submitted to the Consideration of the Bench of Bishops, By a weak Christian." A few excerpts are given from the Dean's answers to Hume and the "weak Christian" in the form of a dialogue between Hume and the Answerer. Hume in his "Essay on Suicide" had expressed his belief that it would be no greater crime to turn "a few ounces of blood from their natural channel" than it would be "to divert the Nile or Danube from its course," and in this imaginary dialogue he is quoted as confessing himself free to leave his present chamber at whatever time he thought proper. The answerer, seeing a great difference between walking out of life and walking out of a chamber, proposes the "far nobler heroism" of Christianity, that of "enduring the cross, despising the shame." The Dean's arguments are thus intended to show that "suicide is a breach of our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves." Answers are also given to a couple of the "weak Christian's" doubts on scriptural veracity; namely, the source of the waters of the great flood and the oddity that Josephus did not mention Herod's massacre of the children. The review closes with the wish that "every poison might meet as good an antidote!"¹²⁴

Arguments such as these are typical of the Warburtonian school of theologians. Hume in his autobiography had characterized them as distinguished by their "illiberal petulance, arrogance, and scurrility" and had made particular reference to a pamphlet which he assumed to have been written by Dr. Hurd against his "Natural History of Religion." Some confusion exists as to the actual author of this pamphlet. The publisher, Thomas Cadell, identified the pamphlet as one titled "Remarks on Mr. David Hume's Essay on the Natural History of Religion, Addressed to the Rev. Dr. Warburton," and stated in 1777 that he had received permission to republish it from Dr. Hurd, then the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry.¹²⁵ However, a letter from "A Member of the Established Church" to the Gentleman's Magazine

in August, 1800, refers to Dr. Warburton as the real author. The unidentified Churchman likens a writer of great literary fame to the governor of a citadel, who, "if he is friendly to the inhabitants" of the adjacent city, "is their principal security against the enemies of their welfare," but, "if he is hostile to their city, "enabled, from his elevated station, to pour down on them inevitable destruction." Such enemies in England are considered by the correspondent to be Hume and Gibbon, whose claims to distinction he acknowledges to be great and formidable. He argues that "every man . . . is most strenuously the friend of religious principle who most completely baffles the attack which they have made against the very foundations of our belief." As an example of such worthy defense, he cites a work by Dr. John Duncan, rector of South Warnborough, Hants., titled "The Libertine and Infidel led to Reflection by calm Expostulation," and recommends it wholeheartedly to every reader of Hume. The tract earlier attributed to Dr. Hurd is mentioned in Duncan's work as now being understood to have been written by Dr. Warburton; and the Churchman concludes with a plea for a new "cheap edition of this energetic tract," which he apprehends "would, at the present time, produce more beneficial effect on society than any other of more general tendency."¹²⁶

As for the philosophical deductions of Mr. Hume, Crito in the Gentleman's Magazine for November, 1808, makes the following conclusion in regard to their moral implications:

Those valuable discoveries of Mr. Hume consisted of a few sophistical quibbles, the jet of which went to shew, that as we cannot discover the immediate link that ties effects to their causes, or, in other words, prove with the force of mathematical demonstration, that it is a necessary quality of fire to burn, or are any wise entitled to conclude, that because the fire burnt my finger when I touched it yesterday, it will burn it again if I touch it to-day; so we have no convincing evidence from the regular form and orderly procession of this great machine, the universe, to prove that its arrangement and motions are the result of designing skill, or give any certain indications of a wise and benevolent FIRST CAUSE. This noble argument may, no doubt, be called a

discovery; but it is a discovery only of the writer's intellectual obfuscation, who did not perceive that of moral truths there can be no strict and logical demonstration; although there may be an equal certainty; that is to say, a conviction as absolute and perfect of those truths from the force of moral evidence, as of physical facts from those proofs which amount to demonstration.¹²⁷

Another article appeared in the January, 1815, issue of the Gentleman's Magazine relative to the philosophy of Hume; but since this is a commentary on the Edinburgh Review's appraisal of Hume's "Essay on Miracles," attention will be directed first to what the latter magazine contained relative to Hume's infidelity and scepticism.

In 1806 a book was published in London called An Historical View of Christianity containing Select Passages from Scripture, which is reviewed in the July issue of the Edinburgh Review.¹²⁸ The author of this book appended comments by Gibbon, Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, and others as support for revelation. The Edinburgh Review comments that this is a hopeless cause, noting that while "Hume merits all our praise as a profound thinker" and that his elegant style "will long recommend him to readers who can comprehend nothing of his philosophy," they have never before met with anyone who expected support for Christianity in the writings of David Hume. An optimistic and confident attitude is assumed by the reviewer about the future of Christianity in England, where people "still continue stedfast, in general, to the faith of our ancestors" in contrast to the lamentable progress of infidelity on the Continent. He cites the failure of the hierarchy in Catholic countries "to maintain the exterior forms of devotion among the higher classes" and goes on to give an illustration of his belief that even the priesthood there had been infected with the contagion of infidelity. It seems that a recent traveler to Rome had told of his having observed "a smile of contempt upon the countenance of several of the cardinals, in the midst of the most solemn offices." The reviewer believes that no such examples exist in England and that "the writings of infidels have made little

impression in this country." Nevertheless, he argues that it is wrong to "resort to their pages for proofs of the truths they denied" and that it is imprudent "to familiarize the ears of our youth with their names and their writings." Furthermore, the inconsistencies of which such infidel writers are guilty are used to the best advantage when they are treated as "adversaries" and not as "auxiliaries." On the principles employed by the unidentified author of An Historical View of Christianity, the review concludes that "it would be just as easy to prove, that St. Paul was a defender of Paganism, as that Mr. Gibbon was a champion of Christianity."¹²⁹ In refusing to put the religious views of Hume to such use, the Edinburgh Review does not, on the other hand, go to the opposite extreme but struggles instead to maintain a middle-of-the-road position. It is, for example, extremely harsh in its criticism of the Warburtonian school. Warburton's "Letters from a late Eminent Prelate to one of his Friends" was reviewed in the January, 1809, issue of the magazine.¹³⁰ The reviewer gives examples of the "brutal violence, the affected contempt, and the flagrant unfairness" used by Warburton in his abuse of such men as Bolingbroke, Voltaire, and Hume, and states that "there is no man . . . who has not, for a moment, taken part with them against so ferocious and insulting an opponent, and wished for the mortification and chastisement of the advocate, even while impressed with the greatest veneration for the cause" Such strong exception is taken to the Warburtonian emphasis because of the wrong effect this "fierce and overbearing aspect of orthodoxy" has on youthful minds. Whereas the learned and the orthodox have no need of such books against Hume and Voltaire, books against these philosophers obviously should be written for the young. The argument is that since the young admire the real excellencies of Voltaire and Hume, "it might be consequently inferred, that they will not listen with peculiar complacency to a refutation of their errors, which sets out with a torrent of illiberal and unjust abuse of their talents

and characters." He concludes that "the bullying and abusive tone of the Warburtonian school . . . has done more harm to the cause of religion, and alienated more youthful and aspiring minds from the true faith, than any other error into which zeal has ever betrayed orthodoxy." The practical effect of the Warburtonian defense, then, is not to provide instruction but rather to "enlist all the generous feelings of their nature on the side of infidelity, --and make piety and reason itself appear like prejudice and bigotry."¹³¹

Other books of a philosophical nature are reviewed in the Edinburgh Review, in connection with which several of Hume's tenets are criticized. Two books by Professor Dugald Stewart receive extensive coverage in 1810 and 1821; and a foreign work De L'Allemagne, by Madam la Baronne de Staël-Holstein, was reviewed in 1813. All of these are concerned with Hume's scepticism. The leading proposition in Stewart's Philosophical Essays is that "we have many very precise notions or ideas, of the origin of which we can give no other account, than that they are necessarily suggested to the mind, by the exercise of certain faculties which furnish the occasions of their production." On this principle, for example, without the faculty of memory, "neither the ideas of time, nor of motion, nor of personal identity, could possibly have been formed," ideas which, according to Stewart, "cannot be traced immediately to consciousness, by any effort of logical subtilty." Therefore, Locke was guilty of a two-fold error, that of limiting all knowledge to sensation and consciousness and omitting the kind of knowledge identified in Stewart's leading proposition, and that Locke had "resolved everything into mere consciousness" by "adopting the vulgar doctrine of ideas, as actual existences lodged in the mind." These fundamental Lockean errors are blamed, then, for the idealism of Berkeley and the "annihilating scepticism of Hume." It is Stewart's opinion that what is needed to correct these errors, both of idealism and scepticism, is to correct "that radical error with

regard to the sources of our knowledge," in other words, to remember that "we have a great multitude of clear and certain notions that cannot be directly referred either to sensation or consciousness, but are necessarily suggested to the mind by the exercise and development of its faculties."¹³²

Eleven years later the Edinburgh Review devotes attention to another work by Dugald Stewart, A General View of the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Science, since the Revival of Letters, Part II. In this work the scepticism of Hume is carefully distinguished from the scepticism of the French philosopher, Bayle, who by a process of induction had concluded only that we have not yet attained certainty. Hume, on the other hand, argued not that we have not reached certainty but that we cannot reach it. According to Hume's system, in the opinion of the review, it is as impossible "to believe, to inquire, or to reason" as it is "to disbelieve, to dissent, or to doubt," and if Hume is to be consistent, "even to think." Again this disposition to absolute scepticism is cited as the source of Hume's political and religious opinions:

Men of such a character have misgivings in every enterprise; their acuteness is exercised in devising objections--in discovering difficulties--in foreseeing obstacles; they hope little from human wisdom and virtue, and are rather secretly prone to that indolence and indifference which forbade the Epicurean sage to hazard his quiet for the doubtful interests of a contemptible race. They do not lend a credulous ear to the Utopian projector--they doubt whether the evils of change will be so little, or the benefits of reform so great, as the sanguine reformer foretells that they will be.¹³³

The contest between scepticism and dogmatism is discussed in a review of De L'Allemagne in the October, 1813, issue of the Edinburgh Review.¹³⁴ Here universal scepticism is described as "intellectual amusement" and an "exercise of subtlety" which are of some value "in humbling the pride of dogmatism," but in the final analysis the dogmatist is defended on the basis of the same differentiation between appeals to intellectual principles and the "dictates of experience":

As the dictates of experience, which regulate conduct, must be the object of belief, all objections which attack them in common with the principles of reasoning, must be utterly ineffectual. Whatever attacks every principle of belief, can destroy none. As long as the principles of science are allowed to remain on the same level (be it called certainty or uncertainty) with the maxims of life, the whole system of human conviction must continue undisturbed. When the sceptic boasts of having involved the results of experience, and the elements of geometry, in the same ruin with the doctrines of religion, or the principles of philosophy, he may be answered, that no dogmatist ever claimed more than the same degree of certainty for these various opinions or convictions, and that his scepticism leaves them in that condition.¹³⁵

One of the leading arguments of the orthodox theologians against the deists and the sceptics was the appeal to the miraculous element in scripture. Inasmuch as miracles were no longer a part of common experience, the all-important question was the extent to which the testimonies of scripture were to be believed. In its review of M. Le Comte Laplace's Essai Philosophique sur les Probabilités, the Edinburgh Review states that the first author "who stated fairly the connection between the evidence of testimony and the evidence of experience, was Hume, in his Essay on Miracles." Hume's essay is described as "full of deep thought and enlarged views," and the reviewer expresses the opinion that the work is full of "maxims of great use in the conduct of life, as well as in the speculations of philosophy." But he adds the provision that Hume's principles should not be stretched "so far as to interfere with the truths of religion."¹³⁶ This comment expresses the deistic inclination of the Edinburgh Review.

As could be expected, exception was taken to this Edinburgh editorial opinion by a correspondent who signed himself "Oxoniensis" in a letter to Mr. Urban in the Gentleman's Magazine for January, 1815.¹³⁷ Oxoniensis prefaces his discussion of evidence from experience and from testimony with a quotation from the review of Laplace in the Edinburgh Review in which physical phenomena were divided into two classes: "the one comprehending all those of which the course is known from experience to be perfectly uniform;

and the other comprehending those of which the course, though no doubt regulated by general laws, is not perfectly conformable to any law with which we are acquainted" The Edinburgh Review apparently agrees with the thesis that the improbability of any violation of the first class is so strong "that no testimony can prevail against it; and it will always be more wonderful that the violation of such order should have taken place, than that any number of witnesses should be deceived themselves, or should be disposed to deceive others." Oxoniensis rationalizes that the Laplace essay is not likely to achieve a wide audience in England and that Hume's reasoning in his "Essay on Miracles" has been sufficiently refuted, but at the same time the "more than tacit approbation of the Heistical doctrines" of Laplace by the Edinburgh Review is his immediate motive for taking up the argument. He notes the "pious" admonition of the reviewer "not to stretch the principles contained in it so far, as to interfere with the truths of Religion," but he goes on to inquire how this is actually possible:

But how we are to avail ourselves of this friendly caution; or by what kind of mental ingenuity we can possibly contrive to admit at the same time, both the soundness of Mr. Hume's philosophy, and the divine pretensions of the Gospel; I have, for my own part, still to learn; it being, I conceive, to all reflecting minds indisputably clear, that as far as the credibility of Revealed Religion is made to rest on the evidence of miracles, so far is it in reality the avowed and exclusive aim, as well as the obvious and necessary tendency of Mr. Hume's Essay, totally to subvert the very ground-work of the Christian faith.¹³⁸

Oxoniensis agrees with the Edinburgh reviewer's position "that there is not a particle of water, or of air, of which the condition is not defined by rules as certain, as that of the Sun or the Planets," but he refuses to concur in the reviewer's deduction from this that it is only "information sufficiently extensive, and a calculus sufficiently powerful" which prevents the reduction of all things to certainty and the deduction of the condition of the world at a future moment from the present instance. He is not persuaded that the same rules "which of necessity define the present and

regulate the future condition of every material substance" also "define and regulate with equal certainty both the present and the future condition of every spiritual substance." His argument provides that if there are heavenly and earthly superior beings whose function it is to exercise "provident and irresistible dominion" over the material world, then it is evident "that, through the practical controul and agency of these superior Beings, that perfect uniformity in the order of physical phenomena, which might otherwise have been with certainty anticipated, will now be liable to frequent and almost perpetual interruption." If it is asserted that no creature is able to alter the course of natural phenomena, no one but "the avowed Atheist or Fatalist" would question the power of the Supreme Being to interfere with "the pre-established order of all sublunary events, and the wonted operation of all secondary causes." Oxoniensis then proceeds to make his case for revelation, which is that if it be allowed that the Supreme Being is granted such a prerogative, then it is "equally possible and easy for that Being to give mankind indisputable evidence of such extraordinary interpositions by means of indirect communication."¹³⁹ Hume maintained that "the most decisive test of truth is men's experience, that a miracle is confessedly an event entirely contrary to such experience," and that when "every man's daily observation" indisputably proves "the deceitfulness and fallibility of human testimony" of those who witness to miracles, the stronger evidence is rejected and the weaker admitted by anyone who believes in a miracle merely on the basis of human testimony. Oxoniensis attempts to destroy this argument by an analysis of the word "experience," which can be universal, individual, or general. With reference to universal experience, he simply says "that in the firm belief of any asserted miracles, there is necessarily implied a positive denial that miracles are contradicted by the universal experience of mankind." If, in the second place, the term experience applies to "what has been sensibly witnessed and observed by the individual whose

judgment it is to decide on the truth or falsehood of any asserted or recorded miracles," he admits that none of us could vouch for the Old Testament miracles; but he proceeds to infer that on this principle, for example, the untravelled inhabitants of warmer climates would forever have to remain incredulous "with respect to the periodical conversion of water into ice in many regions of the earth." In the third place, if Hume's advocates argue that we are in no case to rely on the limited experience of one individual "but the more enlarged experience and observation of mankind in general," Oxoniensis has the ready answer that it is never possible to ascertain "what is, or what is not, in any given instance, the actual result of men's general experience and observation, unless it be permitted us . . . to repose full confidence in the fidelity of human testimony." Citing Newton's principle of gravitation as an example, he states that "without an entire reliance on the general accuracy of what has been written and related on this head by others, no individual of mankind (it is self-evident) could ever possibly attain to a full and rational conviction of this truth." If progress in the science of natural philosophy thus depends on the presumption of the fidelity of human testimony, "Why," Oxoniensis asks, "is the correctness of such testimony to be thus impeached, and its authority thus denied, in all discussions and inquiries that concern the doctrines of Revealed Religion?" If human testimony is necessary in ascertaining and establishing the general rule, why is it considered as of "no validity whatever in ascertaining and establishing the occasional exception?"¹⁴⁰ This is the contradiction Oxoniensis asks Hume's admirers to reconcile, but it is clear that his arguments are based on some presuppositions of faith.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be made from the preceding survey of Hume's contemporary and early posthumous reputation in England as reflected in the four periodicals investigated. In general, the materials illustrate that he

was thought to be a benevolent and amiable gentleman and an elegant and ingenious writer, but a philosopher whose doctrines were considered to be ultimately pernicious. There was a common recognition of his literary excellence, often accompanied by a warning that this should not be allowed to persuade readers to an uncritical acceptance of Hume's conclusions.

Partiality and inconsistency were the chief demerits in his work as an historian; and politically he was derided for his allegiance to the Stuarts and an apparent aversion to popular government, as well as for his failure to understand the basis of the English Constitution prior to the Stuarts. He was defended in some points by the Critical Review and particularly by the Edinburgh Review, where partiality to a Scottish philosopher may have had some natural influence. But even with the latter periodical's attempt to explain Hume's position on the basis of his temperament and early influence, the general conclusion was that he had not been objective in improperly using facts to support favorite theories. Perhaps this was inevitable for an historian who had first arrived at a sceptical attitude toward the idea of order in reality.

With reference to Hume's religious and philosophical views, the criticism in the Monthly Review, the Critical Review, and the Edinburgh Review reflects the deistic point of view. Believing as they did in the demonstrable reasonableness of religion, the deists were at once offended by Hume's "Natural History of Religion" and the Dialogues concerning Natural Religion and supported by his denunciation of religious superstition and fanaticism. On the latter points they found Hume to be an effective assailant against the type of orthodoxy expressed in the Gentleman's Magazine, where appeals are directed to miracles, revelation, and the authority of scripture and where the Warburtonian methods are justified as an antidote equivalent to the strength of the poison. But it is questionable whether the deists succeeded in refuting the philosopher's conclusions on rationalistic principles. On

the contrary, if the Christian religion were truth, then to Hume it would in fact have to rest upon miracles; but since he had never witnessed a miracle and since the testimony of those who said they had did not square with the common experience of men, he had to believe in his own experience. If true religion is neither the attempt to find God at the end of a logical syllogism nor a slavish acquiescence to the dogmas of revealed religion with no reformation of life or society, then surely the doubts of David Hume should have prompted his own age to the vestibule of the Temple. Beyond this it is impossible for a philosopher or a theologian himself to go who has not constructed God in his own image. Thus it appears that, with special reference to the contemporary and early posthumous reputation of Hume, the four periodicals reflect Whig opposition to Tory principles, and deistic and orthodox answers to religious "infidelity" and philosophic scepticism, two areas of controversy that characterized English political and religious thought in the eighteenth century.

Notes

1. The Gentleman's Magazine, XXXVI (November 1766), 499. Hereafter abbreviated "GM."
2. Ibid., 500-501.
3. Idem
4. Ibid., 504.
5. Ibid., 499.
6. Ibid., 504.
7. The Monthly Review, XXXV (November 1766), 390. Hereafter abbreviated "MR."
8. The Critical Review, XXII (November 1766), 376. Hereafter abbreviated "CR."
9. The Edinburgh Review, XIII (January 1809), 356. Hereafter abbreviated "ER."
10. ER, XXIII (September 1814), 301.
11. GM, XLVII (March 1777), 120-121.
12. GM, XLVII (April 1777), 158. (Reference is made to Hughe's Correspondence, Vol. III, p. 245, note).
13. MR, LVI (March 1777), 206.
14. Ibid., 212.
15. Ibid., 213.
16. It is not clear whether this is an editorial comment or Cadell's opinion.
17. GM, XLVII (April 1777), 159.
18. GM, XLVII (July 1777), 326.
19. CR, XLIII (March 1777), 227.
20. CR, Ser. 3, XII (September 1807), 65-71.
21. Ibid., 68.
22. Ibid., 68-69.
23. "Crito" has been identified by Walter Graham (English Literary Periodicals [New York, 1930], p. 158) as the poet and antiquarian John Duncombe.
24. GM, LXXVIII (November 1808), 977-978.

25. Sir Leslie Stephen, A History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York 1962), I, 323, 325.
26. GM, LXXVIII (November 1808), 979.
27. Idem
28. ER, XIX (November 1811), 99.
29. Ibid., 100.
30. Idem
31. Idem
32. Ibid., 101.
33. Idem
34. MR, VI (January 1752), 1.
35. Ibid., 19.
36. MR, XVI (February 1757), 122.
37. MR, XVI (January 1757), 37-38.
38. CR, III (February 1757), 98.
39. CR, VI (November 1758), 411.
40. CR, IX (June 1760), 493.
41. CR, II (December 1756), 385-386.
42. Ibid., 393-394, 404.
43. ER, II (April 1803), 242.
44. ER, XVII (February 1811), 436.
45. Idem
46. ER, XLII (April 1825), 1-31.
47. Ibid., 2-4.
48. David Hume, "My Own Life" in The Philosophical Works of David Hume (Boston 1884), I, vii.
49. MR, XII (March 1755), 207, 229.
50. MR, XVI (January 1757), 50.
51. MR, XX (April 1759), 344-346.
52. Ibid., 364.

53. MR, XXV (December 1761), 401-402, 405.
54. MR, XXVI (February 1762), 82, 95.
55. CR, XLV (April 1778), 290-291.
56. Ibid., 289.
57. GM, LV (July 1785), 511.
58. GM, LV (September 1785), 683.
59. GM, LXVIII (December 1798), 1078.
60. Idem
61. GM, LIX (July 1789), 611-612.
62. GM, LVIII (May 1788), 404-405.
63. Stephen, op. cit., 48.
64. Idem
65. GM, LVIII (May 1788), 405.
66. Idem
67. GM, LXXXV (June 1815), 530.
68. ER, III (October 1803), 154-181.
69. Ibid., 168-169.
70. ER, XII (July 1808), 276-277.
71. Idem
72. ER, XVII (February 1811), 409-428.
73. Ibid., 420.
74. Ibid., 426.
75. ER, XXIII (September 1814), 347-384.
76. Ibid., 381-382.
77. ER, XLII (April 1825), 4-6.
78. ER, XL (March 1824), 92-146.
79. Ibid., 92.
80. Ibid., 93-94.
81. Idem

82. Ibid., 95.
83. Ibid., 96.
84. Ibid., 98.
85. Ibid., 99-100.
86. Ibid., 110.
87. Ibid., 111.
88. Ibid., 134.
89. ER, XLVII (May 1828), 331-367.
90. Ibid., 358-359.
91. MR, XII (March 1755), 229.
92. MR, XVI (January 1757), 36-37.
93. Ibid., 50.
94. MR, XVI (February 1757), 122.
95. MR, LXI (November 1779), 354.
96. Ibid., 354-355.
97. Idem
98. CR, I (April 1756), 200.
99. Ibid., 203.
100. CR, III (February 1757), 107.
101. CR, III (April 1757), 398.
102. CR, VI (November 1758), 411.
103. CR, XLIII (April 1777), 320.
104. CR, XLVIII (September 1779), 161-172.
105. Ibid., 161.
106. Ibid., 171.
107. CR, LXI (January 1786), 80.
108. GM, XLVII (March 1777), 120-121.
109. GM, XLVII (July 1777), 322-328.
110. Ibid., 322.

111. Ibid., 338.
112. Ibid., 322.
113. Ibid., 323.
114. Ibid., 324.
115. Ibid., 325.
116. Ibid., 326.
117. Idem
118. Ibid., 327.
119. Ibid., 328.
120. Ibid., 338.
121. Idem
122. GM, XLIX (October 1779), 507-508.
123. GM, LIV (August 1784), 607.
124. Ibid., 607-609.
125. GM, XLVII (April 1777), 159.
126. GM, LXX (August 1800), 726.
127. GM, LXXVIII (November 1808), 978.
128. ER, VIII (July 1806), 272-284.
129. Ibid., 282-284.
130. ER, XIII (January 1809), 343-366.
131. Ibid., 352-354.
132. ER, XVII (November 1810), 189.
133. ER, XXXVI (October 1821), 260.
134. ER, XXII (October 1813), 198-238.
135. Ibid., 236.
136. ER, XXIII (September 1814), 329.
137. GM, LXXXV (January 1815), 12-15.
138. Ibid., 12-13.
139. Idem
140. Ibid., 14-15.

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Periodicals:

The Critical Review (Issues from 1756 to 1807)

The Edinburgh Review (Issues from 1803 to 1828)

The Gentleman's Magazine (Issues from 1766 to 1815)

The Monthly Review (Issues from 1752 to 1779)

THE EIGHTEENTH- AND EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY REPUTATION OF DAVID HUME
AS REFLECTED IN REPRESENTATIVE PERIODICALS

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Four periodicals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were examined to determine the reputation of David Hume: The Critical Review (from 1756 to 1807), the Edinburgh Review (from 1803 to 1828); the Gentleman's Magazine (from 1766 to 1815), and the Monthly Review (from 1752 to 1779). Contemporary formal reviews of Hume's works were found largely in the Critical Review and Monthly Review. Materials in the Gentleman's Magazine were seen to reflect Hume's early posthumous reputation as the public began to react to his political, religious, and philosophical views. The philosopher's later reputation was determined from the viewpoint of the Edinburgh Review, where his theories were evaluated in relationship to other historians and philosophers and to some of the leading theologians of the period. Because Hume's reputation by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century approximated that of his modern acceptance, examination of the periodicals concluded with an 1828 reference. The reputation of Hume was traced under four categories: (1) Personal Character; (2) Literary Characteristics; (3) Political Views; and (4) Religious and Philosophical Views.

With reference to Hume's character, the periodicals examined were nearly unanimous in their observation of his benevolence, amiability, and gentlemanliness. The philosopher's celebrated dispute with Rousseau was used as a conspicuous example of his patience and benevolent behavior. The fact, however, that Hume chose to publish his own account of the affair after it had become public knowledge is used to illustrate another trait of his character - a passion for public esteem.

Hume's literary excellence was praised in the Critical Review and Monthly Review and later in the Edinburgh Review. Many elements of his style were singled out for attention: clearness and precision of ideas on abstracted and metaphysical subjects, propriety, elegance and spirit, perspicuity, delicacy of sentiment, succinct and animated narrative technique, and flowing yet

correct diction. The Critical Review, however, called attention to some blemishes in Hume's style: affectation and deficiency in weight and simplicity, periphrasis, Scotisms, his use of Roman orthography in spelling words of Latin origin such as favor, his by-passing French influence in employing such words as inconsistence, and some ill-sustained metaphors. In recognizing Hume's literary distinction, all of the periodicals nevertheless warned that this should not be permitted to lead readers to an uncritical acceptance of his views.

The chief demerits of Hume's work as an historian were partiality and inconsistency. Politically, he was criticized in all the periodicals for his allegiance to the Stuarts, for his aversion to popular government, and for his failure to understand the basis of the English Constitution prior to the Stuarts. The Edinburgh Review attempted to explain Hume's anti-democratic sentiments as due to his abhorrence of violence and disorder in society, and his allegiance to the Stuarts and anti-religious views as attributable to the alignment of the Calvinists who had persecuted him in his youth with the Whig party. The consensus of all the periodicals was, nevertheless, that as an historian Hume had not been properly objective in using facts to support favorite theories.

With reference to Hume's religious and philosophical views, the criticism in the Monthly Review, the Critical Review, and the Edinburgh Review reflected the deistic point of view. These periodicals greatly admired his use of reason in religious matters, particularly as an effective ally against the proponents of revealed religion; but at the same time they frankly deplored his conclusions and their implications. On the other hand, the Gentleman's Magazine provided a channel for the expression of orthodox religious views, with appeals to miracles, revelation, and the authority of scripture in refutation of Hume.

The four periodicals, in the matter of Hume's reputation, mirrored

the controversies that characterized English political and religious thought in the eighteenth century. They reflected Whig opposition to Tory principles, as well as deistic and orthodox answers to religious "infidelity" and philosophic scepticism.