

‘Christianity Personified’: Perceval and Pittism

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University Abstract

Pittite politics between the premierships of Pitt and Liverpool has been overshadowed by those long eras of government and by the concurrent Napoleonic Wars. This has particularly caused the neglect of one leading Pittite, the prime minister Spencer Perceval, which is especially surprising given recent scholarly interest in the role of religion in politics and in conservative ideas. He is known either as the ‘assassinated Prime Minister’, or stereotyped as the ‘Evangelical Prime Minister’. This thesis contends that Perceval was a significant, if sometimes unusual, figure in Pittite politics in 1807-12, that this era saw important policies pursued in areas such as church reform, and that Perceval is better understood as an ‘Anglican Prime Minister’ dedicated to upholding the established Church. Recovering Perceval helps us better understand the Pittites in general. He operated amongst a circle of like-minded politicians who supported church reform and opposed Catholic Emancipation. Each chapter duly recovers a topic which demonstrates the continuities between war-time and peace-time Pittite policies, underpinning the thesis’s argument that post-1815 policies need to be understood in relation to the war-time experiences and actions of this generation of Pittites.

These arguments are advanced through five chapters. The first chapter shows how Perceval’s theological beliefs, contemporary descriptions, and his church patronage emphasise his transcendent Anglicanism. The second chapter stresses Perceval’s and his coterie’s role in strengthening and expanding the established Churches in England and Ireland. The third chapter highlights the twin importance of theological beliefs and the necessity of upholding the established Church in shaping Perceval’s attitude towards Catholics, tithes, and nonconformists. The fourth chapter highlights the pragmatic approach the Pittites took to economic questions, and contrasts Perceval with the later ‘liberal Tories’ Canning and

Huskisson. The fifth chapter illuminates Pittite policies that promoted Christianity in India and suppressed the slave trade.

Faculty Abstract

Pittite politics between the premierships of Pitt and Liverpool has tended to be overshadowed by those long eras of government and by the concurrent Napoleonic Wars. This has particularly caused the neglect of one leading Pittite, the prime minister Spencer Perceval. He has been stereotyped as the ‘assassinated Prime Minister’ or as the ‘Evangelical Prime Minister’. The overlooking of Perceval is especially surprising given recent scholarly interest in the role of religion in politics and in conservative ideas. This thesis contends that Perceval was a significant, if sometimes unusual, figure in Pittite politics in 1807-12, that this era saw important policies pursued in areas such as church reform, and that Perceval is better conceived as an ‘Anglican Prime Minister’ dedicated to upholding the established Church. Recovering Perceval helps us better understand the Pittites in general. He operated amongst a circle of like-minded politicians who supported church reform and opposed Catholic Emancipation. The themes of each chapter emphasise topics which demonstrate the continuities between war-time and peace-time Pittite policies, underpinning the argument that post-1815 policies need to be understood in relation to the war-time experiences and actions of the Pittites in government.

To support these objectives the thesis draws upon a wider range of primary correspondence than any of Perceval’s four previous biographers (the most recent of which was in 1963) to shed new light on his role within the Pittites. It draws on a wider range of sources than used by previous biographers. They have a wider geographical range, utilising papers found in America, Ireland, Scotland, and county record offices. They are wider in terms of personnel, including the Grenville and Canning papers. They also include papers, such as Jack Plumb’s bequest to Cambridge University, which were simply unavailable to earlier scholars. The introduction both highlights how Perceval gradually came to be forgotten and overlooked in much existing scholarship, and contends that the Pittites in 1807-

15 have more generally been overshadowed, with attention focused either on Pitt or the post-war years. The thesis' argument is pursued through five thematic chapters. The first chapter contends that Perceval should be viewed chiefly as an Anglican Prime Minister rather than an evangelical one, based on contemporary accounts of him, examination of his prayers, and especially his non-partisan approach to church patronage. The second chapter extends this claim by emphasising Perceval's involvement in Anglo-Irish church reform and in reforming military chaplaincies and education. This aimed at expanding Anglicanism and counteracting the threat of nonconformity in England and Catholicism in Ireland. The third chapter also stresses Perceval's establishmentarian ideas, alongside the importance of his religious beliefs in biblical prophecy, Providence, and aversion for 'idolatry'. This distinguished him from other anti-Catholic Pittites, leading Perceval to staunchly oppose Catholic Emancipation and paying Catholic clergy, to be critical of the Maynooth grant, and resist tithe reforms. It also explains his lukewarm attitude towards the Church of Scotland and hostility towards nonconformists, both inexplicable if he is conceived of as an evangelical figure. The fourth chapter focuses on Pittite socioeconomic policies. It engages with the mainly post-1815 focused historiography about the role of religion in shaping these policies, and argues that the Pittites pursued a mixed approach and presaged the divisions post-1815 between 'High' and 'Liberal Tories'. The fifth chapter focuses on Pittite overseas policies. This again emphasises the importance of Perceval's resolutely establishmentarian convictions in supporting Christian missionaries in India and the Caribbean, condemning Hindu religious practices, and advocating the abolition and suppression of the slave trade. These colonial topics also permit a reinterpretation of the Pittite approach towards renewing the East India Company charter, and in adopting the Orders in Council policies that helped trigger the War of 1812.

The conclusion reaffirms the two themes of the chapter, highlighting how the thesis helps enhance our understanding of Pittism in general, and how Perceval was an important

figure amongst the Pittites, who is best understood as a staunch Anglican. Examination of each of these themes helps illuminate Pittite policies and politics during the war years. It explains how Perceval rose to prominence amongst the Pittites and the policies he helped champion. Consequently it corrects the erstwhile neglect of Perceval, particularly of his Anglicanism and the influence of his piety on the politics of the age. It also shows the significance of war-time policies in laying the foundations for the approach Pittites took in peace.

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enjoyable and sociable. Attending and serving as a bible clerk in Oriel College Chapel not only strengthened my own faith, and helped enhance my appreciation of Perceval's religiosity, but was especially important in my final year as a regular and most pleasant connection with Oxford. My friends at St Anne's have helped provide an internationally diverse and intellectually stimulating environment which cuts across academic disciplines. Attending the Long Eighteenth Century history seminar not only afforded an opportunity to hear many interesting speakers but also to forge social links with graduate historians working in the same area. I have always found history an enjoyable subject to engage with beyond the library and the seminar room, and therefore I am also very grateful to all my friends in the Oxford History Graduate Network and by the Oxford University History Society. They have made both organisations wonderful places to meet and converse with fellow historians.

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List of Abbreviations

BL	British Library
BLRO	Bedfordshire and Luton Record Office, Bedford
Bodleian	Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford
<i>Castlereagh</i>	<i>Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquis of Londonderry</i> , ed. Marquis of Londonderry (12 vols., London, 1848-53).
<i>CPW</i>	<i>Correspondence of George Prince of Wales</i> , ed. A. Aspinall (8 vols., London, 1963-71)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
<i>Colchester</i>	<i>The Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester, Speaker of the House of Commons, 1802-1817</i> , ed. Lord Colchester (3 vols., London, 1861)
DRO	Devon Record Office, Exeter
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>The Edinburgh Review</i>
<i>Fitzwilliam</i>	Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
GA	Gloucestershire Archives, Gloucester
Harrowby	Harrowby MSS Trust (The Ryder Papers), Sandon Hall
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>HMC Bathurst</i>	<i>Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst: preserved at Cirencester Park</i> (London, 1925)
<i>HMC Fortescue</i>	<i>The Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue, Esq. preserved at Dropmore</i> (10 vols., London, 1892-1927)
<i>HPE</i>	<i>History of Political Economy</i> journal
<i>JC</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons</i>

<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JL</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Lords</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
KHC	Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone
<i>LCGIII</i>	<i>The Later Correspondence of George III</i> , ed. A. Aspinall (5 vols., Cambridge, 1962-70)
<i>LPL</i>	Lambeth Palace Library, London
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Caird Library
NUL	Nottingham University Library
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>PD</i>	[W. Cobbett], <i>Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates</i> , 1 st Series (22 vols., London, 1812-20)
<i>PH</i>	W. Cobbett, <i>Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England: from the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the year, 1803</i> (36 vols., London, 1806-20).
<i>Plumer Ward</i>	E. Phipps, <i>Memoirs of the Political and Literary Life of Robert Plumer Ward</i> (2 vols., London 1850)
<i>PR(1)</i>	[W. Debrett], <i>Parliamentary Register</i> (18 vols., London, 1797-1802)
<i>PR(2)</i>	[W. Debrett], <i>Parliamentary Register</i> (3 vols., London, 1803-4)
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
<i>QR</i>	<i>The Quarterly Review</i>
<i>Sidmouth</i>	G. Pellew, <i>The Life and Correspondence of Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth</i> (3 vols., London, 1847).

<i>Southey</i>	<i>Romantic Circles Online, The Collected Letters of Robert Southey</i>
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
TCC	Trinity College, Cambridge
TNA	The National Archives (Kew)
<i>Wellington</i>	<i>Supplementary Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley Duke of Wellington, KG</i> , ed. Duke of Wellington (15 vols., London, 1858-72)
WN	A. Smith, <i>An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations</i> (2 vols., London, 1776)

Introduction

On 5 March 1812 the former and future Foreign Secretary George Canning wrote dolefully to his wife Joan about the current prime minister. Canning declared: ‘why he should not be Minister for 20 years like Sir Robert Walpole I cannot pretend to say’.¹ Three months later Canning compared the same man to Achilles.² However, by June 1812 the prime minister, Spencer Perceval, was dead, victim of the only assassination of a British prime minister. The manner of Perceval’s demise has fixed and caricatured him, even becoming the subject of a rock song. The actual political life which preceded it has been forgotten. Within two years of his assassination the Romantic poet, historian and political polemicist Robert Southey lamented: ‘Here again there is reason to regret [the death of] Perceval – who seems as much out of remembrance as if he had died before the flood.’³ Two decades later John Wilson Croker wrote to Walter Scott’s biographer John Lockhart, ‘Who, nowadays, cares about Castlereagh or Perceval?’⁴

Canning’s comments should alert us to contemporaries’ recognition of Perceval’s importance. He was the most successful Pittite politician during the Napoleonic War. Yet Croker’s and Southey’s comments proved prophetic. This historiographical survey will explain how Perceval drifted ‘out of remembrance’, and, moreover, how he can enhance our understanding of wider Pittite politics. The Pittites in 1807-15 have been overshadowed by the war, by Pitt, and by the post-war governments. The survey begins with the immediate, contrasting responses to his death. It then examines thematically the five different

¹ W. Hinde, *George Canning* (London, 1971), p. 246.

² *PD*, 1812, xxiii, 656.

³ *Southey*, Letter 2476: Robert Southey to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, [2nd Sep. 1814], accessed 10 Jan. 2014 at

http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Four/HTML/letterEEd.26.2476.html.

⁴ *The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries of the Late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker*, ed. L. Jennings (3 vols., London, 1884), ii, p. 230.

interpretations of Perceval that existed during approximately the ensuing fifty years: the Romantic, the Whig, the radical, the Ultra-Tory, and the liberal Tory. Proceeding chronologically, the survey examines the debates over Perceval's management of the war and attitude towards Catholics, which were hotly contested before the First World War, including in two biographies. Since then Perceval has generally been forgotten, with only one biography written, and recent writings concentrating on his death. Historians who might have incorporated Perceval into their research have omitted him. This echoes the limited scholarship on Pittite policies and personnel in this period, especially when contrasted with the considerable scholarship on religion in politics and on the Pittites, especially post-1815. The survey therefore closes by highlighting this wider gap in Pittite historiography.

Reactions to Perceval's death reflected the contrasting opinions held about him during his life and in the subsequent historiography. Within Parliament there was initial agreement, with unanimous condemnation of his assassination and considerable praise for his private virtues. Several parliamentarians broke down in grief. However subsequent debates over provision for Perceval's family and erecting a statue in his honour caused disagreement. William Wilberforce admitted that Perceval's 'political opinions had many strenuous opponents, who might think too large a sum wholly misapplied'.⁵ Reactions beyond Westminster also greatly varied. Crowds fêted the murderer, John Bellingham, and in industrial towns there were parades with flags and bands.⁶ Radicals endeavoured to raise money for Bellingham's family and blamed Perceval's death on the corrupt political system.⁷ Although opposition journals condemned the murder they nonetheless censured Perceval.

⁵ *PD*, 1812, xxiii, 191.

⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963), p. 570.

⁷ G. Pentland, "'Now the great Man in the Parliament House is dead, we shall have a big loaf!'" Responses to the Assassination of Spencer Perceval', *Journal of British Studies*, 51 (2012), pp. 340-63.

The *Edinburgh Review*'s obituary began with a distinction that perpetuated throughout the century:

The late Mr Perceval was a man of unblemished character in private life; mild, benevolent, religious, and uniformly correct in all his conduct. – With every private virtue, however, which could adorn an human being, he was unquestionably the most mischievous of all the bad ministers who, for these thirty years past, have been placed at the head of affairs, in this country; – and, with totally opposite intentions, the political years of his life were steadily employed in bringing this empire to the brink of ruin.⁸

Other hostile newspapers and journals were even less charitable.⁹ Yet simultaneously there were tributes in Parliament and the press, and memorialisation in Westminster Abbey. The less exalted also expressed admiration – a Cambridge undergraduate named Price declared that 'Though unknowing and unknown, I revered that illustrious man when living, I will honour him, dead, and surely no measure can be more congenial to our feelings than to place his statue near that of his mighty predecessor in the path of glory, Mr Pitt in the Senate House of the University.'¹⁰ Importantly Perceval, in death, became revered by two of the foremost Romantic poets and shapers of Romantic Toryism: Robert Southey and Samuel Coleridge.

The Romantics' eulogising of Perceval is the first strand of nineteenth century interpretation of Perceval, and one previously unnoticed. Coleridge and Southey had not

⁸ [Anon], 'Authentic Correspondence and Documents relating to the Proceedings of the Marquis Wellesley, and of the Earl Moira, in the recent Negotiation for the Formation of an Administration', *ER*, 20 (1812), p. 29.

⁹ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. K. Cave (14 vols., London, 1979-84), xi, 4127; [Anon], 'Monthly Retrospect of Politics', *The Belfast Monthly Magazine*, 8 (May 1812), pp. 408-15.

¹⁰ NMM, CLA/1/B, S.G. Price to Longuvenille Clarke, 25 Apr. 1813.

always been fans of Perceval. In March 1808 Henry Crabb Robinson recorded their hostile verdict: '[Southey] deems the last Administration so feeble & impotent that he can[']t conceive of worse – except the present. Coleridge maintains the present Ministry to be such corrupt and ignorant knaves that it is impossible there should be worse – except indeed the last'.¹¹ Southey wrote during the 'No Popery' election of 1807 that Perceval 'deserves hanging ten times more than ever Lord George Gordon did. He doing from knavery what that poor wretch did from frenzy. The impudence of this man & of some of his colleagues makes me lose all patience'.¹² This dislike was founded on Southey's hostility to 'any body who has ever been connected with that wretch Pitt; & secondly because I abominate the way in which he took up the Catholick question ... the greedy manner in which he would have snavelled [sic] the sinecure [Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster] & the impudence of his accepting a post for which he is so utterly unfit'.¹³ As late as March 1810 Southey remained critical of Perceval's government: 'I hope this precious Prime Minister may have his franking services to me imparted to him as good works – for I really do not see any other set off against the black account of his administration.'¹⁴

Southey's opinion may have been reversed by their concurrence over the importance of the established Church. Perceval did praise Southey's article on Methodism 'as the fairest & most comprehensive treatise he ever saw on any subject'.¹⁵ Perceval also recommended

¹¹ *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson and the Wordsworth Circle*, ed. E. Morley (1806-1866) (2 vols., Oxford, 1927), i, p. 51

¹² Southey, Letter 1316: Robert Southey to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, 1 May 1807, accessed 10 Jan. 2014 at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Three/HTML/letterEEEd.26.1316.html.

¹³ Ibid., Letter 1327: Robert Southey to John Rickman, 27 May 1807, accessed 10 Jan. 2014 at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Three/HTML/letterEEEd.26.1327.html.

¹⁴ Ibid., Letter 1755: Robert Southey to John May, 9 Mar. 1810, accessed 10 Jan. 2014 at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Four/HTML/letterEEEd.26.1755.html.

¹⁵ Ibid., Letter 1877: Robert Southey to Thomas Southey, 2 Mar. 1811, accessed 10 Jan. 2014 at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Four/HTML/letterEEEd.26.1877.html; [R. Southey], 'On the Evangelical Sects', *QR*, 4 (1810), pp. 480-514.

Southey's brother Thomas for promotion in the Royal Navy, although Perceval noted beforehand that Southey was 'at present well disposed to us'.¹⁶ By March 1812 Southey described Perceval as 'the fittest prime minister, because he has plenty of political courage, & is equally ready to resist Paddy Rampant, & to stand by the Spainards [sic]'.¹⁷ The public rejoicing at Perceval's assassination horrified not only Southey but Coleridge and Wordsworth.¹⁸ Southey proposed subscribing five guineas towards a statue of Perceval, declaring that: 'I am convinced that the overthrow of the Church establishment would bring with it the greatest calamities for us and for our children. If any man could have saved it, it was Mr Perceval.'¹⁹ Thereafter he praised Perceval in prose,²⁰ poetry, and private correspondence,²¹ informing Dudley Perceval (Perceval's son) that 'Mr Perceval was in my judgement the best minister we have ever had. I looked upon his death at the time, as the greatest misfortune that could have befallen this country & subsequent events have shown that it was so.'²² Southey's favourable view of Perceval contrasted with his detestation of Pitt and subsequent criticism of Lord Liverpool.²³ Coleridge, who had undergone a similar change of views during Perceval's premiership, favourably compared Perceval to Napoleon.²⁴

¹⁶ NMM, YOR/14/3: Perceval to Charles Yorke, 8 July 1811.

¹⁷ *Southey*, Letter 2069: Robert to Thomas Southey, 31 Mar. 1812, accessed 10 Jan. 2014 at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Four/HTML/letterEEd.26.2069.html.

¹⁸ *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, i, p. 93; *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth*, ed. B. Darlington (London, 1982), pp. 143, 147-8; *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. A. Hill (Oxford, 2000), p. 92.

¹⁹ *Southey*, Letter 2095: Robert Southey to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, 16 May 1812, accessed 10 Jan. 2014 at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Four/HTML/letterEEd.26.2095.html.

²⁰ R. Southey, *History of the Peninsular War* 2nd edn, (6 vols., London 1828), iv, p. 542; v, p. 468.

²¹ *Robert Southey: Later Poetical Works 1811-1838*, eds. T. Fulford and L. Pratt (4 vols., London, 2012) iii, p. 62.

²² BL, Add MSS 4913, fo. 22: Southey to Dudley Perceval, 9 July 1835.

²³ [R. Southey], 'The Moral and Political State of the British Empire', *QR*, 44 (1831), pp. 274-5.

²⁴ *S.T. Coleridge Collected Works 3: Essays on His Times*, ed. D. Erdman (3 vols., London, 1978), ii, p. 347.

Five years later Coleridge went further, describing Perceval as ‘the best and wisest minister of this reign’,²⁵ and even ‘the best and wisest statesman, this country has possessed since the revolution’.²⁶

The Romantics’ praise of Perceval was therefore partly owing to his staunch Anglicanism. Perceval’s committed establishmentarianism also brought posthumous praise from Anglican churchmen. Even in 1844 Bishop Edward Stopford of Meath wrote to the Archbishop of Armagh: ‘We never again can trust to any Government manfully to stand up for the Reformed Church in this country as Mr Perceval did’.²⁷ Conservative-minded prelates such as Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter, cited Perceval’s support of Anglicanism when advocating further measures of support in the 1830s.²⁸ Given Perceval’s famed piety it is unsurprising that the evangelical William Roberts selected him as the model Christian politician of George III’s reign.²⁹

The second interpretation of Perceval came from his Whig opponents. The first ‘biography’ of Perceval was published in 1813 by Charles Verulam Williams. Williams wanted to publish Perceval’s previously suppressed defence, written in 1807, of the controversial Princess Caroline, against charges of adultery. Williams also criticised Perceval: ‘Notwithstanding the general sympathy first expressed at Mr Perceval’s untimely fate, it seems the fall of the Man rather than that of the Minister has been more deplored ... since his demise, most of his measures have already been openly or tacitly condemned.’³⁰ This verdict echoed the opinion of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1812 and presaged the judgement

²⁵ *S.T. Coleridge Collected Works 7: Biographic Literaria*, eds. J. Engell and W. Jackson Bate (2 vols., London, 1983), i, p. 212.

²⁶ *S.T. Coleridge Collected Works 6: Lay Sermons*, ed. R. White (London, 1972), p. 122.

²⁷ PRONI, T2772/2/17: Stopford to Beresford, 8 May 1844.

²⁸ *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 1839, xlviii, 1278.

²⁹ W. Roberts, *The Portraiture of a Christian Gentleman* (London, 1829), pp. 167-70.

³⁰ C. Williams, *The Life and Administration of the Right Hon. Spencer Perceval* (London, 1813), p. iv.

of Whigs who conceded private virtues to Perceval whilst condemning his public policies. Nevertheless, Whig judgements could be harsh and vitriolic. The American historian Henry Adams opined in 1898 that:

for a whole generation no English Liberal mentioned the name of the murdered prime minister without recalling the portrait drawn by Sydney Smith in the wittiest and keenest of his writings, in which Perceval was figured as living at Hampstead upon stewed meats and claret, and walking to church every Sunday before eleven young gentlemen of his own begetting, with their faces washed and their hair pleasingly combed.³¹

This was the famous image found in Smith's satirical assault on Perceval in 1807, the *Letters of Peter Plymley*. An extended laceration of anti-Catholics, Smith's satire contrasted Perceval's oppression of Ireland with his private virtues, declaring: 'I should prefer that he most certainly owed for the veal of the preceding year, wandered from the marriage-bed, whipped his boys, and saved his country'. Smith termed him 'the sepulchral Spencer Perceval' and 'Friar Perceval'.³² Perceval's opposition to Catholic Emancipation and other reforms explain the opprobrium posthumously poured upon him. Henry Brougham compared him to a mole.³³ Lord Holland, the familial heir of the Foxites, declared that:

His virtues and his vices rendered him the most mischievous and dangerous man who had guided our councils for a century. Nothing but a dread that my words

³¹ H. Adams, *The Second Administration of Thomas Jefferson 1805-1809* (3 volumes, New York, 1898), ii, p. 56.

³² S. Smith, *The Letters of Peter Plymley, Essays and Speeches* (London, 1852), pp. 24, 44, 59.

³³ H. Brougham, *Statesmen of the Time of George III* (2 vols., London, 1839), i, p. 246.

may be distorted into an attempt to palliate an atrocious crime makes me hesitate in pronouncing his death (as in my conscience I think it) a very fortunate event for the glory, the happiness, and independence of my country.³⁴

This detestation encompassed all Whigs and Liberals. Pitt received praise from Palmerstonians such as George Lewis (Palmerston's Chancellor of the Exchequer) and William Massey (Palmerston's Under-Secretary at the Home Office and opponent of the 1860 Reform Bill) which deviated from traditional Whig anti-Pittism.³⁵ Contrastingly, Lewis' image of Perceval borrowed liberally from the hostile views of Lord Holland, Brougham and the *Edinburgh Review* obituary.³⁶ Massey likewise declared: 'Mr. Perceval was destined to prove that Mr. Addington was not the weakest possible Minister'.³⁷ At the other end of the liberal spectrum Charles Dickens condemned Perceval in 1866 as 'Palpably a third-rate professional politician scarcely fit to carry Lord Chatham's crutch'.³⁸

What heightened this reprobation was that Perceval's age had passed away. Catholic and Dissenter emancipation; parliamentary reform; industrialisation and urbanisation – all the familiar landmarks of Perceval's Britain had receded leaving him an anachronism in the harsh judgement of teleological Victorians. Walter Bagehot remarked in 1856: 'Hardly any fact in history is so incredible as that forty and a few years ago England was ruled by Mr Perceval. It seems almost the same as being ruled by the *Record* newspaper.'³⁹ Bagehot

³⁴ *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party 1807-1821*, ed. Lord Stavordale (London, 1905), p. 133.

³⁵ G. Lewis, *The Administrations of Great Britain from 1783 to 1830* (London, 1864) pp. 134-7; W. Massey, *History of England during the Reign of George the Third* (4 vols., London, 1855-1863), iv, pp. 5, 262-3.

³⁶ Lewis, *Administrations of Great Britain*, pp. 299-300.

³⁷ Massey, *Reign of George the Third*, iv, p. 578.

³⁸ C. Dickens, 'Old Stories Re-Told. The Assassination of Mr Perceval', *All the Year Round*, 16 (1866), p. 498.

³⁹ *Bagehot's Historical Essays*, ed. N. St John-Stevás (New York, 1966), p. 186.

further criticised Perceval, arguing that ‘He is not entitled to any glory for our warlike successes: on the contrary, he did his best to obtain failure by starving the Duke of Wellington, and plaguing him with petty vexations.’⁴⁰ This brings us to a major theme of historiographical debate about Perceval – his record during the Peninsular War. The charge of inadequately supporting Wellington dated back to 1812, when it was cited by Marquis Wellesley in resigning from Perceval’s cabinet. However, it gained prominence through the work of the war veteran, Foxite turned radical, Napoleon-sympathiser, William Napier. Napier described Perceval as someone who

sought only to maintain himself in power. Narrow, harsh, factious, and illiberal, in every thing relating to public matters, this man’s career was one of unmixed evil. His bigotry taught him to oppress Ireland; but his religion did not deter him from passing a law to prevent the introduction of medicines into France during a pestilence. He lived by faction; he had neither the wisdom to support, nor the manliness to put an end to the war in the Peninsula; and his crooked, contemptible policy was shewn by withholding what was necessary to sustain the contest, and throwing on the general the responsibility of failure.

This passage created a storm. Perceval’s son Dudley Perceval thought it impugned his father’s motives and thus his private character.⁴¹ After an epistolary exchange Perceval published a pamphlet defending his father which reputedly caused Napier to demand a duel.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴¹ D. Perceval, *Remarks on the Character Ascribed by Colonel Napier, (in the Fourth Volume of his History of the War in the Peninsula,) to the late Right Hon Spencer Perceval* (London, 1835), p. 10.

⁴² [J. Cole], ‘An Episode in English History: Assassination of Mr. Perceval in 1812’, *Dublin University Magazine*, 62, (August, 1863), p. 187.

Perceval declined, causing Napier to substitute literary for physical violence, by vigorously defending his claims in the next volume of his history.⁴³ Napier's hostile interpretation of Perceval's actions (if not his motives) became the dominant interpretation. Given the decline in anti-Catholicism, Napier's influential view ensured that the Whig interpretation of Perceval on the two key areas of historiographical clash held the field throughout the Victorian era.

The third strand of interpretation, the radical verdict on Perceval, was even more uncompromising than Whig criticisms, not conceding any merits to Perceval. Having been prosecuted by Perceval for libelling the Irish government, Cobbett subsequently savaged him as 'a man who soon surpassed all the rest in power as well as in impudence and insolence towards the people'.⁴⁴ Radicals endeavoured to undermine the image of private virtue and probity by harking on about MP William Maddock's' accusation of 1809 that Perceval had connived in selling a Parliamentary seat.⁴⁵ It fitted within the critique of the unreformed political system as corrupt and repressive. As late as 1847 the Chartist George Julian Harney denounced Perceval for having planned to build barracks in Regent's Park, lacerating him as 'a constitutional tyrant'.⁴⁶ However, the abuse was largely the work of Perceval's radical contemporaries and thereafter the radical view merged with the Whig.

⁴³ W. Napier, 'Counter-Remarks to Mr. Dudley Montagu Perceval's Remarks', *History of the war in the Peninsula and in the south of France from the year 1807 to the year 1814* (6 vols., London, 1828-40), v, pp. xlv-lxxxvi.

⁴⁴ W. Cobbett, *History of the Regency and Reign of King George the Fourth* (London, 1830), para. 77.

⁴⁵ G. Ensor, *Defects of the English Laws and Tribunals* (London, 1812), pp. 278, 282, 474; C. Walker, *Letters on the Practice of the Bristol Court of Requests on Judicial Sinecures in Bristol: and Other Important Subjects* (London, 1820), p. 54.

⁴⁶ [Anon], *The Trial and Condemnation of Lord Viscount Palmerston at Tiverton, July 30, 1847, Containing a Verbatim Report of the Speech of G. Julian Harney, the People's Member for Tiverton* (London, 1847) p. 4; D. Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography* (London, 2010), p. 291.

Turning from Perceval's opponents and their heirs, let us now consider the judgements of Perceval's supporters and their successors. The fourth viewpoint on Perceval came from Ultra-Tory supporters. We have already seen one of them, Perceval's son Dudley, defending his father's war-time reputation. More significantly was their approbation of Perceval's anti-Catholicism. J.J. Sack has shown how Ultra-Tories seized control of Pitt's legacy after his death, turning him into an anti-Catholic Christian champion.⁴⁷ Perceval really was a pious anti-Catholic, providing ample evidence for this Ultra-Tory interpretation which predominated until the 1840s. Within a few weeks of his death a book about the St Bartholomew Day massacre of 1572 had been dedicated to Perceval, much to Canning's chagrin.⁴⁸ The Duke of Newcastle in 1828, amid the growing agitation for Catholic Emancipation, looked back to 1812 and declared that 'We lost our virtuous, exemplary and highly-gifted minister, and from that time our moral decline commenced'.⁴⁹ More influential was the work of Archibald Alison, whose twelve-volume *History of Europe* was the best-selling work on the French Revolution and Napoleonic War for most of the nineteenth century, and whose journal articles held considerable sway after 1830.⁵⁰ Alison panegyrised Perceval as 'the champion of the PROTESTANT FAITH', whose character, sincerity, spirit and the 'acuteness of his reasoning' ensured his success in power. Perceval's reputation rose as he remained in power 'and possibly his premature end alone prevented him from rising ... to the very highest place among British statesmen'. Subsequent events had justified his opposition to Catholic Emancipation.⁵¹ Ironically Perceval's eldest son and namesake voted

⁴⁷ J.J. Sack, 'The Memory of Burke and the Memory of Pitt: English Conservatism Confronts its Past, 1806-1829', *HJ*, 30 (1989), pp. 623-40.

⁴⁸ *PD*, 1812, xxiii, 654.

⁴⁹ *Unrepentant Tory: Political Selections from the Diaries of the Fourth Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne, 1827-28*, ed. R. Gaunt (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 353.

⁵⁰ M. Milne, 'Archibald Alison: Conservative Controversialist', *Albion*, 27 (1995), pp. 419, 442.

⁵¹ A. Alison, *History of Europe from the Commencement of the French Revolution in 1789 to the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1815* 9th edn (12 vols., London, 1870), viii, pp. 198-9.

for Catholic Emancipation in 1829, so anti-Catholic Ultra-Tories looked instead to Dudley Perceval to become Perceval's political heir. After attacking Napier in 1835, in the 1840s, amid the build-up to the Maynooth grant crisis, Dudley used the publication of his father's 1805 speech on Catholic Emancipation and his views on tithes and Maynooth, to expound his anti-Catholicism. Dudley cooperated with Robert Inglis, who once told Macaulay 'that England never had but one government quite after his own heart and that government was Mr. Percival's [sic]'.⁵² Inglis cited Perceval's example of providing money for poorer livings in 1809 whilst advocating state support for church building in 1840, praised Dudley Perceval's assistance when replying to Peel over Maynooth, and purchased for £42 an original portrait of Perceval.⁵³ The cause of anti-Catholicism enjoyed its last hurrah in 1851 following the 'Papal Aggression'. Fittingly Inglis rose to cite Perceval's example:

If such a man as the late Mr. Perceval—and in referring to that name, he could not but acknowledge the obligations which the cause of Protestantism, and of the Church of England owed in the present day to Mr. Dudley Perceval, a man worthy to bear the name of his great father—if such a man as the late Spencer Perceval had been at the head of affairs he felt satisfied that such an aggression would not have been permitted—he would at once have vindicated the rights and the honour of the Crown, and the independence of the nation—he would not have shrunk back, and left nothing done for a period of three months, like Her Majesty's present Ministers. He also, like the Russian Sovereign of to-day, or the English Sovereign a hundred and fifty years ago, would have sent a fleet to Civita

⁵² *Selected Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, ed. T. Pinney (Cambridge, 1982), p. 61.

⁵³ *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 1840, lv, 283; 1845, lxxix, 42, 45; 1856, cxl, 1777.

Vecchia, and have compelled the ‘triple tyrant’ to renounce his insolent pretension.⁵⁴

However, by 1851 the historiographical tide had turned and was ebbing from the Ultra-Tory to the liberal Tory interpretation.

Roger Fulford in 1952 argued that the source of much hostility to Perceval among academic historians resulted from his having excluded Canning from office in 1809. This also provoked Disraeli, and it is with Disraeli that we must begin an examination of the fifth interpretation of Perceval: the critical liberal Tory viewpoint.⁵⁵ There is a twofold irony in this. First, Disraeli had many ideas in common with Southey yet on this matter they disagreed sharply.⁵⁶ Secondly, Canning’s loyal private secretary and biographer, Augustus Stapleton, was broadly sympathetic to Perceval. Stapleton did not explicitly condemn the restrained policy he saw Perceval pursuing towards the Peninsular War and acknowledged success in the war just prior to Perceval’s assassination. He also described Perceval as ‘a scholar and a Christian; a man endowed with abilities, which entitled him to the respect and confidence of his country’.⁵⁷ Thus Disraeli was not following an explicitly Canningite critique of Perceval. Instead, the origins of Disraeli’s vituperation may partially lie with his mentor in the 1830s, Lord Lyndhurst. In 1823 Lyndhurst (who became Attorney-General the following year) offered a surprisingly lukewarm opinion on Perceval, whom he thought had ‘carried with him much of the habits and feelings of his [legal] profession’, too rigidly defended ‘the existing

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1851, cxiv, 82.

⁵⁵ R. Fulford, ‘British Prime Ministers VIII: Spencer Perceval’, *History Today*, 2 (1952), p 100.

⁵⁶ W. Speck, ‘Robert Southey, Benjamin Disraeli and Young England’, *History*, 95 (2010), pp. 194-206.

⁵⁷ A. Stapleton, *George Canning and his Times* (London, 1859), pp. 182, 196, 199.

state of things', and introduced war-taxes of which Lyndhurst disapproved.⁵⁸ Disraeli was dismissive of all of Pitt's heirs, denouncing them as 'pseudo-Tories'. His explicit reference to Perceval was decidedly damning given that Disraeli unfavourably compared him even to the 'Venetian oligarchs' whom he complained had governed since 1714:

Run over the statesmen that have figured in England since the accession of the present family, and we may doubt whether there be one, with the exception perhaps of the Duke of Newcastle, who would have been a worthy colleague in the council of Mr. Perceval, or the early cabinet of Lord Liverpool. Assuredly the genius of Bolingbroke and the sagacity of Walpole would have alike recoiled from such men and such measures.⁵⁹

Disraeli's disdain for Perceval was further demonstrated during the 1845 debates over Maynooth. Bizarrely the debate saw Perceval more frequently cited by supporters of Maynooth – who appealed to his acceptance of continuing the grant as a condition of the Act of Union – than its opponents (who, as we shall see, were more in spirit with Perceval's views). Peel had cited the precedent of Perceval supporting an increase in the Maynooth grant in 1808 to justify his own proposed increase.⁶⁰ Disraeli retorted:

How astonished must Mr. Perceval's ghost be – if he have a ghost to be thus appealed to! Were it Mr. Pitt, or Fox, or Burke, whom the right hon. Gentleman

⁵⁸ Baron Lyndhurst, *Administration of the Affairs of Great Britain, Ireland, and their Dependencies, at the Commencement of the year 1823: Stated and Explained* 4th edn (London, 1823), pp. 15-6.

⁵⁹ B. Disraeli, *Coningsby, or the New Generation*, intro. M. Elwin (London, 1968), pp. 73-4, 132.

⁶⁰ *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 1845, lxxix, 29-30.

has quoted to-night, that was brought in to settle this question, we might feel the controlling influence of the great apparition. But Mr. Perceval to be brought in to settle it!⁶¹

Although some anti-Maynooth Conservatives disagreed with Disraeli's dismissive opinion, the debate signalled a change in attitudes to Perceval among Conservatives. No longer cited for his anti-Catholic views, instead Perceval's tolerance of the 1808 Maynooth grant was cited in debates throughout the 1850s and 1860s against those advocating its abolition.⁶² Moreover the attempts of Disraeli to refashion the Conservative Party involved re-evaluating its past. Aside from his idiosyncratic novels, he benefited from the work of his journalistic associate Thomas Keibel, who concurred with the anti-Perceval judgement pronounced by Napier. In 1869 Keibel complained that regarding the Peninsular War '[Perceval] resembled those foolish speculators who never can be made to see that the surest road to ruin is to starve the speculations they engage in ... Perceval always took the money consideration first, and the moral consideration second'.⁶³ Therefore, after half a century, the praise of the Romantics, Anglican clerics, and Ultra-Tories was overborne by the critical consensus of liberal Tories and Whigs.

The partisanship which coloured historical assessments of Perceval's era gradually subsided in the 1860s. The last time that Perceval's policy approach was directly recommended in Parliament was by Peel's son in 1860 in a debate over Sicily.⁶⁴ By 1863 Palmerston could

⁶¹ Ibid., 558-9.

⁶² Ibid., 1855, cxxvii, 2096-7, cxxviii, 1492-3; 1856, clxi, 1068; 1869, cxciv, 1793.

⁶³ [T. Keibel], 'Lord Liverpool and his Times', *QR*, 126 (1869) p. 181.

⁶⁴ *Hansard*, 3rd Series, 1860, clix, 1778. Though Perceval's debt policy may have been thought useful for Churchill in the 1920s. Churchill College, Cambridge, CHAR2/153/75: 5th Earl of Harrowby to Winston Churchill, 10 Oct. 1927; CHAR2/153/76-8, Perceval to Harrowby, c. 1812.

cite Perceval's charitableness towards his political opponents to a Liberal audience in Edinburgh and have it greeted with cheers.⁶⁵ This marks a shift in commentary on Perceval, from the diverse posthumous interpretations that intertwined with political issues, to less frequent commentary that treated Perceval as an historical figure. The time seemed ripe for a biography to match the great tomes on Sidmouth (by Pellew), Eldon (by Twiss), Pitt (by Stanhope), Fox (by Russell), Liverpool (by Yonge) and Canning (by Stapleton). As early as 1840 Croker had contemplated writing an article on Perceval, and had approached John Perceval for information on Spencer's early life.⁶⁶ The publications of Eldon's and Sidmouth's biographies spurred Dudley Perceval to consider writing 'a Memoir of my Father's life and Administration'. In 1849 he wrote to Isabella Mansel, daughter of Perceval's tutor and friend William Lord Mansel, hoping to overcome a problem facing all Perceval biographers:

One of my greatest hindrances I have always felt and found to be the scarcity of familiar correspondence. Mr Perceval, living in London, and seeing all his most intimate friends constantly, and being all his life exceedingly occupied with business, appears to have written very few confidential letters to private friends, and all that explanation of motives and justification of resolves, which so often incidentally arises from the unreserved correspondence with a private friend is sadly wanting to his biographer.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ 'Lord Palmerston in Edinburgh', *Caledonian Mercury* (2 Apr. 1863), p. 2.

⁶⁶ *Croker Papers*, ii, p. 340.

⁶⁷[Anon], 'The Right Rev. William Lort Mansel', TCC, G. 14.117, p. 86, Dudley Perceval to Isabel Mansel, 15 Nov. 1849.

His hopes were dashed,⁶⁸ and thereafter he became embroiled in the ‘Papal Aggression’ controversy and contesting Gladstone’s Oxford University constituency in 1853, before dying in 1856. His brother-in-law, Spencer Walpole, Home Secretary in the three ministries of the Earl of Derby, took up the biographical mantle. He informed Archibald Alison:

I am thinking of making a slight sketch of Mr Perceval, on the scale of Southey’s Life of Nelson, if I can find time to go over the materials. I think you have hardly done him justice; but, to be sure you had enough to do with your own heroes. Sir James Graham behaved nobly on that subject: he insisted on his [Perceval’s] bust being put up among the worthies of England in the hall of Rugby.⁶⁹

However, it was his namesake eldest son, Governor of the Isle of Man, historian of post-1815 England, and biographer of John Russell, who completed the task with two volumes published in 1874. Walpole largely defended his grandfather, calling him in the preface ‘a great and good man’. Walpole argued that Perceval’s anti-Catholicism merely reflected his times and supported his management of the war, although in typically Victorian fashion he censured the government’s advancing of £6 million of Exchequer Bills in 1811 to head off a commercial crisis.⁷⁰

Although it became the dominant biography for nearly ninety years, it received mixed reviews. There was praise in a general way; but there was criticism that Walpole’s kinship impaired his judgement;⁷¹ and heavy criticism of Spencer Perceval’s interest in biblical

⁶⁸ BL, Add MS 49193, fo. 27-8: P. Mansel to Dudley Perceval, 22 Nov. 1849; fo. 30: Isabel Mansel to Dudley Perceval, 22 Dec. 1849.

⁶⁹ A. Alison, *Some Account of My Life and Writings: An Autobiography: edited by his daughter-in-law, Lady Alison* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1883), ii, 449.

⁷⁰ S. Walpole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval* (2 vols., London, 1874), i, p. vii; ii, pp. 324-7, 208.

⁷¹ H. Wilson, ‘The Life of Spencer Perceval’, *Examiner*, 3441 (10 Jan. 1874), pp. 39-40.

prophecy. Moreover the work was criticised as too official: ‘Whether Mr. Perceval ever read a book, or discussed an interesting topic, or told a story, or made a joke, or laughed at one, cannot be discovered from his grandson’s account of those parts of his life which alone he thinks worth recording.’⁷² Above all Walpole neither discredited Napier’s criticisms, nor blocked Canning’s sunbeams from continuing to shadow Perceval.⁷³ This liberal Tory preference for Canning was articulated by Kebbel, who opined that ‘we think he [Walpole] almost goes too far in regretting Mr Perceval’s loyalty to all existing abuses’ and reaffirmed Napier’s claim about Perceval’s alleged stinginess during the Peninsular War. Kebbel portrayed Perceval as an unwitting supporter of reactionary ‘Addington’ Toryism, as opposed to true Pittite Toryism as personified by Canning. As Kebbel admitted: ‘The vindication of Perceval from many of the charges under which his political reputation has long been staggering, depends to some extent on shaking the credibility of Canning. In fact the fame of the one has to be established at the expense of the other.’⁷⁴

Much of the sparse commentary on Perceval can only be gleaned from biographies of others. In 1891 two biographies on Peel resulted in starkly contrasting impressions of Perceval. The Irish Home Rule MP Justin McCarthy was unsurprisingly hostile to the pro-Unionist, Perceval, calling him ‘a man of respectable character and very meagre abilities – perhaps one of the least gifted of English Prime Ministers’. Of his assassin Bellingham McCarthy wrote:

He had done something for Spencer Perceval. Perceval, who would otherwise have hardly been remembered at all, or, if remembered, would have been borne in

⁷² [Anon], ‘Life of Spencer Perceval’, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 37 (10 Jan. 1874), p. 50.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁷⁴ T. Kebbel, ‘Life of the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval’, *The Academy*, 90 (24 Jan. 1874) pp. 79-80.

memory only as the butt of some of Sydney Smith's jokes, was by the bullet of the murderer's pistol exalted to the apotheosis of heroism and martyrdom.⁷⁵

Contrastingly, the naval historian, journalist and first editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, James Thursfield, remarked 'On Perceval the judgement pronounced by history has been perhaps too severe.' Although no genius, 'a wretched financier', inflexible Tory and forgettable speaker, Perceval was praised as 'a great parliamentary leader', a dogged pursuer of other's policies, and for his 'personal disinterestedness ... His fault as a politician were mainly those of his creed and time.' However, Thursfield still thought Canning the greatest of Pitt's four heirs (Perceval, Canning, Castlereagh and Liverpool).⁷⁶ Biographers of Canning at the beginning of the twentieth century largely passed over Perceval's ministry.⁷⁷ Harold Temperley notably omitted Perceval as an heir to Pitt, unlike 'Castlereagh, Canning, Wellesley, Liverpool, and in a sense Grenville, [who] were his most famous political descendants, representing the different aspects of his policy and mind.'⁷⁸ In 1909 Philip Treherne did provide a biography of Perceval, defending his war-management, and arguing that character was central to Perceval's success.⁷⁹ The work was denounced as unoriginal (though readable).⁸⁰ One reviewer did reveal a broader trend of Perceval having been forgotten:

⁷⁵ J. McCarthy, *Sir Robert Peel* (London, 1891) pp. 16, 18.

⁷⁶ J. Thursfield, *Peel* (London, 1891) pp. 22-3, 25.

⁷⁷ Especially J. Marriott, *George Canning and His times: A Political Study* (London, 1903).

⁷⁸ H. Temperley, *Life of Canning* (London, 1905), p. 68.

⁷⁹ P. Treherne, *The Right Honourable Spencer Perceval* (London, 1909), pp. 118, 132-4, 227-30.

⁸⁰ L. Melville, 'Spencer Perceval', *The Bookman*, 36 (1909), pp. 34-5; [Anon], 'Spencer Perceval', *The Irish Times*, (12 Feb. 1909), p. 7.

But the book should be useful. It relates in a fair and impartial way the political history of a somewhat obscure period, the decade that followed Pitt's death. We say 'obscure,' not because there is any particular difficulty in arriving at the truth, but because the historians chiefly devote themselves to the story of foreign affairs. And, indeed, the political history is not attractive. A not very competent Ministry and a peculiarly unscrupulous Opposition are not agreeable objects of study.⁸¹

Treherne had less impact on historiographical interpretation than Walpole had done. John Fortescue wrote in 1911 that Perceval was 'a man whom historians, for some reason, have combined to belittle and to malign; and I suspect that he is known to the majority of Englishmen through a few bitter and unfair sentences in Napier's *History of the Peninsular War*'.⁸² Despite Michael Bentley's view that Canning had fallen out of favour with the Conservatives of the 'House of Cecil',⁸³ Canning was definitely preferred by the pro-Pitt John Holland Rose, who was baffled at Pitt's reputed preference for Perceval over Canning as his potential successor in 1798 (when Pitt duelled with Tierney) and called Perceval an 'unimaginative plodder ... to one alone was vouchsafed the fire of genius ... Canning'.⁸⁴ However Fortescue, an opponent of equality and democracy, took aim at the Bonapartist Napier, both in his Ford Lectures of 1911 and in his magnum opus *History of the British Army*. In the former Fortescue described Perceval as 'not only a remarkably able man, but in the highest degree honest, honourable, straightforward, and courageous'.⁸⁵ In the latter

⁸¹ [Anon] 'The Right Honourable Spencer Perceval, By Philip Treherne (Book Review)' *The Spectator*, 102 (6 Feb. 1909), p. 231.

⁸² J. Fortescue, *British Statesmen of the Great War, 1793-1814* (Oxford, 1911), p. 193.

⁸³ M. Bentley, 'Liberal Toryism in the Twentieth Century', *TRHS*, Sixth Series, 4 (1994), p. 186.

⁸⁴ J. Holland Rose, *William Pitt and The Great War* (London, 1911), pp. 466, 569.

⁸⁵ Fortescue, *British Statesmen*, pp. 274, 264, 194.

Fortescue vehemently criticised ‘an eminent historian [who] has summed him up as “an industrious mediocrity of the narrow type”’, citing Perceval’s talents in debate, integrity, public spirit and ‘the courage which of itself sufficed to raise him above mediocrity’. In both works Fortescue lamented Perceval’s assassination prevented him gaining credit for his efforts. In words echoing Southey’s exhortation:

Forget not him, my Country, in thy joy!
But let thy grateful hand
With laurel garlands hang
The tomb of Perceval.⁸⁶

Fortescue wrote: ‘in this place at least his service must not remain uncommemorated, because he endured the dust and heat of the race without gaining the immortal garland’.⁸⁷ Fortescue’s revisionist view of the Peninsular War was influential, but his revisionist view of Perceval attracted little attention. Indeed the second century after Perceval’s death was to see him slip from mediocre bigot to forgotten man.

We now enter the fog of recent historiography where panegyric, temperate praise and intemperate execration give way to neglect. As the politically Liberal barrister turned popular historian Philip Guedalla wrote in 1926:

This shadowy figure, which gleams uncertainly in the flash of Bellingham’s
pistol, emerged from the Treasury to govern his country. He was (the inventory is

⁸⁶ *Southey: later Poetical Works*, iii, p. 62.

⁸⁷ J. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, (13 vols., London 1899-1930), vii, p. 330.

not exhilarating) a sound financier and a good debater, with those vague attributes of mind which Englishmen agree to describe in public men as honesty. His supporters could express a faintly patronising determination to 'fix this honest little fellow firmly in his seat'.⁸⁸

Guedalla adopted a patronising approach to Perceval, subsequently calling him 'inoffensive Perceval'.⁸⁹ The following year Perceval was described as a 'faint memory'.⁹⁰ This situation might have been rectified had David Maxwell Fyfe persisted in his plan, formulated in 1940, 'to write a life of Spencer Perceval'.⁹¹ Instead he imitated Perceval by becoming Solicitor-General, before putting his research and literary skills to prosecuting Nazis at Nuremberg and drafting the European Convention on Human Rights. The next writer on Perceval was therefore Roger Fulford in 1952. Fulford's criticism of Perceval was partly motivated by hostility towards his sympathisers:

There is to-day a popular and respected school of historical writers – drawing much of their inspiration from that select but quarrelsome academy off the High Street at Oxford [probably Oriel College] – which seeks to enlarge the merits of Conservative politicians and magnify their private virtues into public ones.⁹²

Two months later a letter criticised Fulford's article. Written by Denis Gray, then undertaking a doctorate, its theme echoed the sentiment expressed by Perceval's grandfather in 1716: 'I

⁸⁸ P. Guedalla, *Palmerston* (London, 1937), p. 41.

⁸⁹ Idem, *The Duke* (London, 1931) p. 223.

⁹⁰ G. Hurst, 'England in the Nineteenth Century, 1806-10 by A. F. Fremantle', *EHR*, 47 (1932), p. 504.

⁹¹ *Hansard*, 5th Series, 1957, ccvi, 1177; Churchill College, Cambridge, Kilmuir Papers, MR Acc 1485, Box 11 File 3: notes on planned biography, 1942.

⁹² Fulford, 'Spencer Perceval', p. 98.

don't write you this from the Publick prints, but private letters which may be depended on.'⁹³ Gray cited the Liverpool and Perceval manuscripts and Commissariat of the Treasury records as evidence which disproved Napier's allegations of neglect and meanness.⁹⁴ In 1963 Gray published a new biography of Perceval. He was largely positive, devoting considerable interest to Perceval's administrative reforms at the Treasury (the subject of his doctoral research) and the supplying of Wellington with bullion, thereby slaying Napier's claims of inadequate commitment.⁹⁵ Gray's acknowledgements to Sir Lewis Namier presaged his adoption of a Namierite approach to Perceval's era, disclaiming the old Whig and Tory labels and declaring that doing so 'would ... be about as helpful as trying to group members according to the colour of their hair'.⁹⁶

Gray's work has become the standard biography of Perceval, but it has its shortcomings. First, its archival foundations were largely drawn from the British Museum (now the British Library), Sandon Hall, the Public Record Office (now the National Archives at Kew), and the privately-held Holland collection. However, in 1988 the historian J. H. Plumb bequeathed a significant private collection of Perceval's papers to the University of Cambridge. There are, moreover, several other MS collections connected with Perceval of which Gray was probably unaware – in county record offices, in the other national libraries of the British Isles, and privately held (such as at All Saints' Church in Ealing, which is dedicated to his memory and was established through a bequest of his last surviving daughter Frederica), and also in America, notably at Duke University. Of course the technological revolution which has abetted the discovery of disparate archive material has also enormously

⁹³ L. O'Neill, 'Dealing with Newsmongers: News, Trust, and Letters in the British World, ca. 1670-1730', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 76 (2013), p. 220.

⁹⁴ 'Correspondence', *History Today*, 2 (Apr. 1952), p. 297.

⁹⁵ D. Gray, *Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister* (Manchester, 1963), pp. 305-52.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. xi, 111.

enhanced our access to contemporary printed material. Secondly, the biography reflected the secularism and Namierite tendencies of the age. Despite its portentous sub-title of the 'Evangelical Prime Minister', evangelicalism was, as many reviewers noted, 'a minor theme in the book'.⁹⁷ Perceval's religious beliefs were largely consigned to one early chapter and virtually no attempt was made to connect his beliefs to his politics. This tendency was more starkly demonstrated by another Namier acolyte, Ian Christie, who avoided any mention of Perceval's religiosity in a character sketch of 1982.⁹⁸ Thereafter, aside from the standard biographies in the *History of Parliament*, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and anthologies of prime ministers,⁹⁹ recent popular focus has fallen entirely on Perceval's assassination, bringing forth three commercial books (the latest positing a conspiracy theory), two radio plays, a smattering of articles in newspapers and historical magazine marking the bicentenary of his murder, an article on reactions to his assassination, and a rock song.¹⁰⁰ The bicentenary brought forth no academic biography or monograph.

⁹⁷ G. Guttridge, 'Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister 1762-1812 by Denis Gray', *Journal of Modern History*, 36 (1964), p. 340; G. Goodman, 'Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister, 1762-1812, by Denis Gray', *The American Historical Review*, 70 (1964), p. 122; J. Walsh, 'Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister, by Denis Gray', *JEH*, 16 (1965), p. 108.

⁹⁸ I. Christie, *War and Revolution: Britain 1760-1815* (London, 1982), p. 290.

⁹⁹ R. Thorne, 'Perceval, Hon. Spencer', *History of Parliament: The Commons 1790-1820, Volume IV Members G-P* (5 vols., London, 1986), pp. 765-73; P. Jupp, 'Spencer Perceval', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* accessed 23 May 2013 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21916>; J. Marlow, 'Spencer Perceval', in H. Van Thal (ed.), *The Prime Ministers: Volume One From Sir Robert Walpole to Sir Robert Peel* (Chatham, 1974), pp. 273-81.

¹⁰⁰ M. Gillen, *Assassination of the Prime Minister; the Shocking Death of Spencer Perceval* (London, 1972) D. Hanrahan, *The Assassination of the Prime Minister: John Bellingham and the Murder of Spencer Perceval* (Stroud, 2012), A. Linklater, *Why Spencer Perceval Had To Die: The Assassination of a British Prime Minister* (London, 2012); N. Andrew, 'Today's Radio Choice', *Daily Mail* (4 Mar. 1999), p. 53, 'Afternoon Play: Bellingham And the Ambassador', *Daily Mail* (26 Apr. 2003), pp. 54-5; H. Gault, 'Spencer Perceval: Private Values and Public Virtues', *The Historian*, 98 (2008), pp. 6-12, B. Anderson 'Spencer Perceval Deserves Better from Posterity', *Daily Telegraph* (28 Apr. 2012) accessed 9 Jan. 2014 at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/9233091/Spencer-Perceval-deserves-better-from-posterity.html>. M. Kennedy, 'Spencer Perceval, the Assassinated Prime Minister that History Forgot', *The Guardian* (10 May 2012) accessed 9 Jan. 2014 at

The justification for attention to Perceval, however, is not simply his neglect. It is that he affords an opportunity to consider aspects of a surrounding Pittite politics which are neglected or under-emphasised in the existing literature. The neglect of Perceval therefore reflects a broader neglect of the politics of this epoch – the period between the death of Pitt and the defeat of Napoleon. The exploits of Wellington on the Lines of Torres Vedras or Napoleon by the banks of the Danube or amid the Russian snows, have enjoyed much greater attention. War strategy and administration are the aspects most eminent in writing on domestic government.¹⁰¹ Likewise the great clashes of Pitt or Fox, or the rise of radicalism and response of loyalism, have consumed much high- and low- political history. Thus, a recovery of the character and preoccupations of Pittite politics through Perceval helps to redress the predominance of the earlier era of Pitt and the later age of Liverpool. It also permits an examination of a ‘High Tory’ figure during the war years and in office. Indeed, Perceval’s noted piety makes consideration of the religious components unavoidable. As we shall see this complements the ‘religious turn’ in recent historiography, particularly focused on socio-economic policies, which has also incorporated Victorian Whigs.¹⁰²

Revealingly no monograph has directly focused on the Pittites as a group throughout the two-and-a-half decades after Pitt’s death. Contemporaries confidently wrote of a group of

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/may/10/spencer-perceval-assassinated-prime-minister>. Pentland, ‘Great Man’; N. West, ‘Rock of Ages’, *Financial Times Magazine* (17 Feb. 2007), p. 36.

¹⁰¹ C. Hall, *British strategy in the Napoleonic War 1803-15* (London, 1992); R. Muir, *Britain and the defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815* (London, 1996); A. Harvey, *Collision of Empires: Britain in Three World Wars, 1793-1945* (London, 1992); R. Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: The Organisation of Victory, 1793-1815* (London, 2013).

¹⁰² R. Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion, and Reform, 1830-1841* (Oxford, 1987); B. Hilton, ‘Whiggery, Religion and Social Reform: The Case of Lord Morpeth’, *HJ*, 37 (1994), pp. 829-59.

individuals that existed, variously termed the ‘friends of Mr Pitt’,¹⁰³ ‘disciples of Mr Pitt’,¹⁰⁴ ‘the Old Pittites’,¹⁰⁵ the ‘Pitt party’,¹⁰⁶ or ‘Pittites’.¹⁰⁷ Few used the ‘Tory’ designation later popularised by the Victorians.¹⁰⁸ Discussions even occurred over strands of Pittites, and whether Perceval and others were a ‘pure Pittites’.¹⁰⁹ Most opponents were labelled ‘Foxites’;¹¹⁰ though distinction was made between them and Grenville’s followers.¹¹¹ ‘Whig’ was occasionally used to describe these opponents by the Pittites,¹¹² though it was also claimed by government supporters.¹¹³

The Pittites’ division over who deserved this label testified to their wider disunity. This was true during as well as after Pitt’s life. Not all Pittites had followed Pitt out of office in 1801 or shared his subsequent hostility to Addington’s ministry. They had not always

¹⁰³ *Plumer Ward*, i, p. 302; Duke of Buckingham, *Memoirs of the Court of England during the Regency 1811-1820* (2 vols., London, 1856), i, p. 251; NLI, MS 63 fo. 886: Perceval to Duke of Richmond, 30 Apr. 1810.

¹⁰⁴ BL, Add MS 89143/1/6/7: Princess of Wales to Perceval, 6 Oct. 1809.

¹⁰⁵ NLI, MS 72, f. 1764, Duke of Richmond to Perceval, 26 Apr. 1812.

¹⁰⁶ *Plumer Ward*, i, p. 205.

¹⁰⁷ *HMC Bathurst*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁸ J.J. Sack, *From Jacobites to Conservatives: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain c.1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 65-7, 88-9; BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 176: Stephen to Perceval, 28 Sep. 1810. At a local level in Bristol Samuel Romilly was described as of the ‘Whig Interest’ being opposed by the ‘Blue Interest’ headed by Charles Bathurst. *Bristol Record Office*, 12144, fo. 39, 43: Election Proceedings 1812.

¹⁰⁹ *Letter of the First Earl of Malmesbury, His Family and Friends*, ed. J. Harris (2 vols., London, 1870), ii, pp. 191, 195; BL, Add MS 42773, fo. 86: Pretymen to Rose, 14 Nov. 1808; NLI, MS 72, fo. 1770: Duke of Richmond to Perceval, 3 Apr. 1812; *CPW*, viii, p. 222.

¹¹⁰ BL, Add MS 89143/1/6/7: Princess of Wales to Perceval, 6 Oct. 1809; *Plumer Ward*, i, pp. 302, 316, 330, 338, 342, 351, 372, 393, 451.

¹¹¹ *Plumer Ward*, i, pp. 342, 351, 451,

¹¹² *Ibid.*, i, p. 301. BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 176: Stephen to Perceval, 28 Sep. 1810. We find the Baptist minister Fuller also using the ‘Whig’ label for the opposition: Regent’s Park, The Angus Library, Oxford, Fuller Papers, Box H1/1: Fuller to W. Ward, 7 Oct. 1811; Box H1/2: Fuller to Marshman, 5 Mar. 1808.

¹¹³ *PD*, 1809, xiv, 103; *The Letters of George IV*, ed. A. Aspinall (3 vols., London, 1938), i, p. 143. However, ‘the Whig creed’ was ambiguous. Earl Dudley, a Parliamentary opponent of Perceval’s ministry, declared that if being a Whig consisted in saying ‘there ought to be a reform in Parliament, because the people wish for it ... I am a Tory’, because he denied both propositions. *Letters to ‘Ivy’ from the first Earl of Dudley*, ed. S. Romilly (London, 1905), pp. 92-3

concurred with his views on Catholic Emancipation. Perceval reflected those senior supporters of Pitt who nonetheless often disagreed with him. Perceval was vigorous and principled in his opposition to Catholic Emancipation; whereas Pitt had resigned over it in 1801. Pitt sympathised with tithe commutation;¹¹⁴ Perceval never reconciled himself to a reforming scheme. Pitt championed the creation of the London Flour and Bread Company to ease scarcity in 1801; Perceval vigorously criticised the idea. Pitt wanted Fox included within his second ministry in 1804; Perceval made Fox's absence a condition of his inclusion.¹¹⁵ Yet Perceval was unstinting in his approbation for Pitt. Even during rancorous parliamentary debates in 1803 he lauded Pitt's 'great talents and his exalted mind: and I know that great good must be attained for this country, under any govt. where he is placed at the head'.¹¹⁶ He was punctilious in agreeing to pay Pitt's debts.¹¹⁷ His posthumous praise extended beyond the eulogistic description of him as 'a man who not only saved his Country in his own time when nothing but himself could have saved it, but by his bright example has left a luminous light behind him, has left a light by which others may see their way'.¹¹⁸ When confronted, as Pitt had been, with the exigency of a Regency, Perceval modestly stated 'that what he had to do was the merest plain-sailing in the world – his duty had not difficulties: that, as to the debates, he spoke from a brief (meaning Mr. Pitt's brief)'.¹¹⁹ He did not go as far as Rose or Melville, who professed to consider what Pitt would have done before acting;¹²⁰ but the highest praise that could be bestowed upon him was that he was a 'worthy successor of Mr.

¹¹⁴ M. Duffy, *The Younger Pitt* (Harlow, 2000), p. 147.

¹¹⁵ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XI.5: Perceval to Redesdale, 10 May 1804.

¹¹⁶ *PD*, 1803, ii, 237.

¹¹⁷ Bodleian, MS Wilberforce d. 14, fo. 129-30: Perceval to Wilberforce, 29 Jan. 1806.

¹¹⁸ BL, Add MS 49180, fo. 221: Draft speech on Windham's army plan, 1806.

¹¹⁹ *Plumer Ward*, i, p. 335.

¹²⁰ L. Vernon-Harcourt, *The Diaries and Correspondence of the Right Hon. George Rose, Containing Original Letters of the most Distinguished Statesmen of his Day* (2 vols., London, 1860), ii, p. 377; D. Brown, 'The Government of Scotland under Henry Dundas and William Pitt', *History*, 83 (1998), p. 279.

Pitt'.¹²¹ Perceval was ideally suited to an age in which the 'character' of political leaders, and a reputation for virtue, which had begun with Pitt,¹²² were increasingly important. His character was identified as crucial to his political appeal. This included approbation for 'his manly firmness, his integrity, honour and courage'.¹²³

The historiography of the Pittites divides between biographies, works focusing on the intellectual components of different strands of Pittism, (normally in the post-1815 era) and works focusing on religious influences on their politics. The trilogy by John Ehrman on Pitt the Younger has been fruitfully complemented by Michael Duffy, Jennifer Mori, and a special edition of *History* journal in 1998.¹²⁴ Recent biographies have also concentrated on Grenville,¹²⁵ Castlereagh,¹²⁶ Portland,¹²⁷ Eldon,¹²⁸ Wellington,¹²⁹ and Henry Dundas (Melville).¹³⁰ Aspects of Canning, Earl Bathurst, and Addington (Sidmouth) have also been explored,¹³¹ though their biographies, like Perceval's and Huskisson's, are a generation older

¹²¹ Plumer Ward, i, pp. 335-6, 341.

¹²² P. Langford, 'Politics and Manners from Sir Robert Walpole to Sir Robert Peel', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 94 (1996), pp. 103-25; B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England, 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), p. 113.

¹²³ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 115-6: Stephen to Perceval, 3 Mar. 1809; fo. 141: Stephen to Perceval, 9 Sep. 1809; Plumer Ward, i, pp. 275, 300, 337, 343, 346.

¹²⁴ J. Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt* (3 vols., London, 1969-1996); Duffy, *Younger Pitt*; J. Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution, 1785-1795* (Edinburgh, 1997); *History*, Vol. 83 (1998).

¹²⁵ P. Jupp, *Lord Grenville, 1759-1834* (Oxford, 1985).

¹²⁶ J. Bew, *Castlereagh: Enlightenment, War and Tyranny* (London, 2011).

¹²⁷ D. Wilkinson, *The Duke of Portland: Politics and Party in the Age of George III* (Basingstoke, 2003).

¹²⁸ R. Melikan, *John Scott, Lord Eldon 1751-1838: the Duty of Loyalty* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹²⁹ R. Muir, *Wellington* (2 vols., New Haven, 2013-5).

¹³⁰ M. Fry, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992); D. Brown, 'Henry Dundas and the Government of Scotland' (Edinburgh Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1989).

¹³¹ S. Lee, *George Canning and Liberal Toryism, 1801-1827* (Woodbridge, 2008); N. Thompson, *Earl Bathurst and the British Empire 1762-1834* (Barnsley, 1999); C. Fedorak, *Henry Addington, Prime Minister, 1801-1804: Peace, War, and Parliamentary Politics* (Akron, Ohio, 2002).

at least.¹³² Perceval and Huskisson are not alone in having been overlooked in this recent scholarship. Key figures surrounding Perceval, such as his brother-in-law Lord Redesdale, or the Ryder family (despite their voluminous papers) have generally been ignored.¹³³ The posthumous reshaping of Pitt's image, and subsequent legacy, has been stressed by J.J. Sack.¹³⁴ With Victorian notions of Pitt's Toryism consigned to the historiographical dustbin there have been various descriptions applied to him. Michael Duffy portrayed him as predominantly a pragmatic improver.¹³⁵ Jennifer Mori perceived Pitt as a 'court Whig', combining notions of gradual improvement, of utility, and civic virtue modelled on Cicero.¹³⁶ Joe Bord has similarly recast Lord Grenville, along with Henry Petty, as a 'pragmatic Whig' and forerunner to 'Empirical Liberalism', whose enlightenment and technocratic approach are perceived to differ from the 'Country Whiggism' of Foxites and the 'Philosophical Whiggism' of Brougham, Horner and the *Edinburgh Review*, and come close to being a secularised version of liberal Toryism. Bord's work is methodologically interesting in drawing its interpretation from focusing on the less glamorous subjects tackled by the Talents, such as vaccinations, the Maynooth grant, and the 'New Plan of Finance' of 1807.¹³⁷

¹³² C. Fay, *Huskisson and his Age* (London, 1951); P. Ziegler, *Addington: A Life of Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth* (London, 1965); Hinde, *George Canning*.

¹³³ The exceptions being E. Mitford, *Life of Lord Redesdale* (1939); M. Smith, 'Henry Ryder and the Bath CMS: Evangelical and High Church Controversy in the Late Hanoverian Church', *JEH*, 62 (2011), pp. 726-43; and idem 'Henry Ryder: A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Gloucester in the year 1816', in M. Smith and S. Taylor (eds.), *Evangelicalism in the Church of England 1790-1900* (Bury St Edmunds, 2004), pp. 51-109.

¹³⁴ Sack, 'Memory of Burke and Pitt', pp. 623-40; M. Ledger-Lomas, 'The Character of Pitt the Younger and Party Politics, 1830-1860', *HJ*, 47 (2004), pp. 641-61; D. Smith, 'The Bubble Reputation: William Pitt the Younger in the Nineteenth Century', *Dalhousie Review*, 49 (1970), pp. 461-73. For Pitt's 1850s influence on Gladstone, P. Ghosh, 'Gladstone and Peel', in P. Ghosh and L. Goldman (eds.), *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 57-9.

¹³⁵ Duffy, *Younger Pitt*, pp. 32, 89-94.

¹³⁶ J. Mori, *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 3-4; idem, 'The Political Theory of William Pitt the Younger', *History*, 83 (1998), pp. 234-48.

¹³⁷ J. Bord, 'Whiggery, Science and Administration: Grenville and Lord Henry Petty in the Ministry of All the Talents, 1806-7', *Historical Research*, 76 (2003), pp. 108-27.

Boyd Hilton was praised for taking a similar multifaceted approach to Pittite ideas.¹³⁸

Likewise, this thesis will illuminate aspects of Pittite politics and policies which are currently little understood, such as efforts at church reform or colonial policy. The chapter topics, such as church reform, Catholic Emancipation, or the suppression of the slave trade have received limited scholarly attention during the Napoleonic War epoch. That limited attention has often served merely as a prelude or afterword to scrutiny of another period. They are also topics where Perceval's own role has been under-emphasised, both in thematic literature and the sparse biographical work on Perceval.

The post-1815 epoch has been the deepest mine of historiographical activity. Debate has raged over the changing or constant nature of Liverpool's ministry, specifically whether a 'liberal Tory' element can be detected.¹³⁹ Hilton has contrasted the 'mechanical' world-views of men such as Canning or Huskisson with the 'organic' world-views of Wellington or Vansittart.¹⁴⁰ He has also construed Huskisson's ascent to the cabinet as marking the beginning of the unravelling of the Liverpool government.¹⁴¹ Parry has suggested that liberal Toryism was primarily a question of presentation, an appeal to a newly-important 'public opinion'.¹⁴² The illiberal wing has been explored both through Peter Jupp's upbeat account of Wellington's government of 1828-30,¹⁴³ and through articles on Ultra-Tory stalwarts such as

¹³⁸ S. Skinner, 'A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England, 1783-1846 (book review)', *EHR*, 122 (2007), p. 777.

¹³⁹ W. Brock, *Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism, 1820 to 1827* (Cambridge, 1941); J. Cookson, *Lord Liverpool's Administration: The Crucial Years 1815-1822* (Edinburgh, 1975); B. Hilton, 'Lord Liverpool's Administration: The Crucial Years, 1815-1822 (book review)', *EHR*, 91 (1976), pp. 395-7.

¹⁴⁰ B. Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-1830* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 311-13; idem, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 222-7; idem, *Mad, Bad & Dangerous People?*, pp. 315-24.

¹⁴¹ B. Hilton, 'The Political Arts of Lord Liverpool', *TRHS*, 38 (1988), pp. 147-70.

¹⁴² J. Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (London, 1993), pp. 27-49.

¹⁴³ P. Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform: The Duke of Wellington's Administration, 1828-30* (Basingstoke, 1998).

the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Falmouth.¹⁴⁴ The intellectual respectability of the economic ideas of these men has been restored by the work of Anna Gambles,¹⁴⁵ whilst the idiosyncrasies of Romantic propagandist and poet Robert Southey have similarly garnered attention from political historians. David Eastwood particularly used Southey to widen appreciation of ‘Ultra-Toryism’ away from a narrow constitutional focus.¹⁴⁶ Drawing back to examine the whole era more generally, Philip Harling has examined the decline and fall of ‘Old Corruption’,¹⁴⁷ part of a wider revision away from viewing the Pittite administrations as reactionaries.¹⁴⁸ The role of the state,¹⁴⁹ and the ‘age of reform’ have also been reconsidered.¹⁵⁰ However, these studies have mainly concentrated on the post-1815 era, and often on actors outside of government. By focusing on Perceval we can help give attention to the war years and on government action in that era.

Since 1963 there has been greater interest in the role of ideas, particularly religious and evangelical ones, in influencing early nineteenth-century politics. Three significant works stand out. The first is Ian Bradley’s 1974 Oxford DPhil on Evangelicals in Parliament, later emended into a book.¹⁵¹ He concentrated on the ‘Saints’, to the neglect of conservative evangelicals. Thus, Bradley claims that Perceval and Vansittart found it ‘inappropriate and as

¹⁴⁴ *Unrepentant Tory*, ed. Gaunt; E. Jaggard, ‘Lord Falmouth and the Parallel Political Worlds of Ultra-Toryism, 1826-32’, *Parliamentary History*, 33 (2014), pp. 300-20.

¹⁴⁵ A. Gambles, *Protection and Politics: Conservative Economic Discourse, 1815-1852* (Woodbridge, 1999).

¹⁴⁶ D. Eastwood, ‘Robert Southey and the Intellectual Origins of Romantic Conservatism’, *EHR*, 104 (1989), pp. 308-31; P. Harling, ‘Robert Southey and the Language of Social Discipline’, *Albion*, 30 (1998), pp. 630-55.

¹⁴⁷ P. Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’: The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford, 1996), esp. pp. 90-134 for 1806-15.

¹⁴⁸ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, pp. 313-49.

¹⁴⁹ J. Innes, ‘Forms of ‘government growth, 1780-1830’, in D. Feldman and J. Lawrence (eds.), *Structures and Transformation in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 74-99.

¹⁵⁰ A. Burns and J. Innes (eds.), *Rethinking the Age of Reform, Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 2003).

¹⁵¹ I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London, 1976).

contrary to the spirit of their religion to apply it to the conduct of worldly affairs as the Saints found it not to.' Hence, equally, 'Perceval would never have dreamt of letting those Scriptural precepts which he expounded [on prophecy] intrude into his cabinet meetings'.¹⁵² Religion in politics, including evangelicalism, continued to be defined through the 'Saints'. Secondly, Jonathan Clark posited the idea of Hanoverian Britain as an *ancien régime*, a confessional state, with a strong attachment to monarchy,¹⁵³ and whose Anglicanism was of a high-Church variety. Clark's interpretation was subjected to strong criticism, but also encouraged Robert Hole to explore its specific manifestation in late Hanoverian clergymen.¹⁵⁴ It is curious that though Perceval could be construed as epitomising the aristocratic, staunchly Anglican, staunchly conservative politician envisaged as paradigmatic by Clark, he barely features. This oversight might be attributable to the broad scope of Clark's work; or, more probably, to Clark assuming that the evangelical tag so commonly and uncritically applied to Perceval meant that he did not fit the pattern. Thirdly, Boyd Hilton's work has knitted together religious thought and socioeconomic policies, through the idea of a pervasive evangelical temperament. Liberal Tories subscribed to a mechanistic, pessimistic worldview, inspired by thinkers such as Thomas Chalmers. High Tories (and more extreme evangelicals) construed the world predominantly in organic terms, governing through networks and contacts. Hilton's focus, however, is mainly post-1815 and he has reasonably asserted that he 'was not writing a history of Evangelicalism' with his *Age of Atonement*.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² I. Bradley, 'The Politics of Godliness: Evangelicals in Parliament 1784-1832' (Oxford Univ. DPhil thesis, 1974), pp. 62-3.

¹⁵³ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, 1985). A modified second edition was published in 2000.

¹⁵⁴ R. Davies, 'The Politics of the Confessional State, 1760-1832', *Parliamentary History*, 9 (1990), pp. 38-49; J. Innes, 'Jonathan Clark, Social History and England's "Ancien Regime"', *P&P*, 115 (1987), pp. 165-200; R. Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England, 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹⁵⁵ B. Hilton, 'Evangelical Social Attitudes: A Reply to Ralph Brown', *JEH*, 60 (2009), p. 124.

Hilton decided to engage in what David Eastwood called ‘intellectual excommunication’ of Perceval.¹⁵⁶ Hilton declared: ‘clearly Perceval’s evangelicalism was not of the liberal type we have in mind when we talk about its influence over the “official mind” and “public doctrines” of the period’.¹⁵⁷ In the paperback edition postscript response to his critics, Hilton blandly dismissed as inaccurate and misrepresentative a review by Norman Gash which had criticised his distinctions between Liberal and High Tories, the portion most pertinent to Perceval, rather than offering a detailed rebuttal.¹⁵⁸

Examining Perceval also illuminates the significance of his friends and relatives, who served in government with him and who shared his views. This coterie of Pittites have received far less attention than Canning, Castlereagh, and Liverpool. This group included Perceval’s life-long friend Dudley Ryder, who became Earl of Harrowby, served as Foreign Secretary during Pitt’s second ministry, was minister without portfolio during Perceval’s government, and shared Perceval’s support for the established Church and abolitionism. His brother, Richard Ryder, also served as Home Secretary during Perceval’s administration. Equally important, as we shall see, was Perceval’s brother-in-law, Lord Redesdale, the contentious Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1802 to 1806 when he was a frequent correspondent with Perceval. They shared a commitment to strengthening the established Church and to resisting Catholic Emancipation. A fourth notable figure, particularly sympathetic to promoting church reform and education, was Charles Abbot, the Speaker of the House of Commons from 1802 to 1817. Their involvement in war-time Pittite policies therefore receives fresh attention in this thesis.

¹⁵⁶ D. Eastwood, ‘The Age of Uncertainty: Britain in the Early-Nineteenth Century’, *TRHS*, Sixth Series, 8 (1998), p. 97.

¹⁵⁷ Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, p. 219.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., *The Age of Atonement* paperback edn (Oxford, 2001), p. 390; N. Gash, ‘The Age of Atonement – The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic-Thought, 1795-1865, Hilton, B (book review)’, *EHR*, 104 (1987), pp. 136-40.

This thesis therefore seeks to reinstate Perceval within these historiographical trends on Pittism and religion in early nineteenth-century politics. The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter questions whether we should describe Perceval as the ‘evangelical prime minister’. Unlike previous views it argues that Perceval is much better understood as an ‘Anglican prime minister’, with a strong commitment to the established Church. It examines his family background, his relations with the ‘Saints’, his theological views, and his church patronage. It helps to highlight the main difference between Perceval and most other senior Pittites, namely the importance of Perceval’s religious beliefs to his policies.

The second chapter takes up the idea of Perceval as an Anglican prime minister, examining his role in the context of Pittite church reform. It argues that a Pittite coterie, including Perceval, the Ryder family and Lord Redesdale, drove forward measures to strengthen the established Churches in England and Ireland. This constitutes an under-emphasised component of Pittite policies, a conservative-motivated measure of constitutional reform that parallels with Pitt’s enactment of Anglo-Irish union and contrasts with hostility to parliamentary reform.

The third chapter focuses on non-Anglican religious groups within Britain: Roman Catholics, the Church of Scotland, and Protestant nonconformists. It argues that Perceval was more overtly anti-Catholic than hostile to Protestant nonconformists, partly because of his stronger religious hostility to their beliefs. This religiosity, notably in terms of biblical prophecy, ideas of Providence, and an abhorrence of ‘idolatry’ contrasts with the mainly secular, constitutional, premises of other Pittite opponents of Catholic Emancipation. Perceval was hostile to the Maynooth grant and to tithe reform, both against Pitt’s example. The chapter emphasises how this distinguished Perceval from Canning. Comparison is then

made with the hands-off approach which Perceval's ministry adopted towards the Church of Scotland, and the gradually more benign approach towards Dissenters.

The fourth chapter engages with Boyd Hilton's connection between evangelicalism and economic policy. Did Perceval's religious beliefs impact on his economic policies? Can we see a Hiltonian nexus in Pittite policies in 1807-12? The chapter argues that Perceval's establishmentarianism did mean that he supported a minimum stipend for curates whilst cautiously opposing a minimum wage for weavers. Evaluating the role of religion also requires examining the impact of political economy. A general overview of the economic policies pursued by the Pittites suggests a mixed approach of continuity with protectionist impulses alongside the non-interventionist ideas championed by Pitt. A case study focusing on food supplies both reaffirms the continuing political importance of this topic during the Napoleonic Wars and how policy was grounded in perceived experience. The second case study, on the bullion question, also stresses the differences between the later liberal Tories Huskisson and Canning, and the governing Pittites.

The fifth chapter examines Perceval's unusual place among the Pittites as a champion of Christianity in India and an enthusiastic abolitionist. It argues that Perceval's religiosity again distinguished himself from other Pittites. Whilst Indian policy remained primarily controlled by the Dundas family, Perceval was strongly critical of Hindu religious practices, due to his animus against idolatry, and was sympathetic towards missionaries in India. His Providential concerns drove his commitment to abolishing the slave trade, a cause he only shared amongst senior Pittites with Canning and Pitt himself. Perceval's government was significant in laying the foundations for subsequent attempts to suppress the slave trade after 1807. Finally, the chapter scrutinises Ann Burton's thesis that abolitionist sentiments were used to justify the Orders in Council that instigated the War of 1812.

This thesis therefore contends that post-1815 Pittite policies often have their origins in war-time decisions and debates; and that Perceval was a significant Pittite, whose distinct feature was the importance of his religious beliefs, especially his Anglicanism, in influencing the political opinions that he espoused.

Chapter 1: The Evangelical Prime Minister?

Introduction

Perceval, as we have seen, has been typecast as the ‘Evangelical Prime Minister’, a label often used, but seldom explored in greater detail. Evangelical is a loaded term, resonant of ecumenism and of a religious zeal described as ‘enthusiasm’. Its association with the politics of the Napoleonic Wars is primarily with the ‘Saints’, pious MPs connected with William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. Before considering the Pittites’ church reform in the second chapter we need to resolve the vexed question of Perceval’s churchmanship.

Perceval’s piety certainly stood head-and-shoulders above other prominent Pittites. Pitt’s religiosity was a posthumous concoction.¹ Canning, although Boyd Hilton has detected the influence of evangelicalism, was emphatically not renowned for his piety.² Bew’s re-evaluation of Castlereagh has stressed his receptiveness to Enlightenment thought, rather than any hidden faith.³ Eldon’s training as a cleric did not presage any overt religiosity in his public life.⁴ Yet the transformation of Pitt into a Christian champion testifies to the significance of piety to the broader Pittite constituency. Hence the illumination offered by examining the piety of Perceval. Moreover, to understand the subsequent chapters’ topics, and Perceval’s connection to them, requires an appreciation of Perceval’s piety. This is not easy. Even studying the theological beliefs of contemporary bishops has proven challenging to the historian.⁵ This chapter takes a holistic approach to Perceval’s beliefs and religious

¹ J.J. Sack, ‘The Memory of Burke and the Memory of Pitt: English Conservatism Confronts its Past, 1806-1829’, *HJ*, 30 (1989), pp. 632-4.

² B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 57, 228-9.

³ J. Bew, *Castlereagh: Enlightenment, War and Tyranny* (London, 2011), p. xxx.

⁴ R. Melikan, *John Scott, Lord Eldon 1751-1838: The Duty of Loyalty* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 17.

⁵ G. Ditchfield, ‘Sir George Pretyman-Tomline: Ecclesiastical Politician and Theological Polemicist’, in W. Gibson and R. Ingram (eds.), *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 277-98.

identity, arguing that he would be more aptly termed the ‘Anglican Prime Minister’. It begins with his family and education, which teases out the origins of Perceval’s Christian faith and explains his position within the Pittites. The chapter’s argument is then pursued by an analysis of contemporary descriptions of Perceval’s denominational identity, and of how he interacted with both the Clapham Sect and the high-Church Hackney Phalanx. Perceval’s theological ideas are illuminated through his prayers, his work on biblical prophecy, and his belief in a Providence acting on the world. Lastly Perceval’s Anglicanism is further demonstrated by an exploration of his non-partisan approach to church patronage.

Perceval’s Family and Education

Spencer Perceval’s religiosity presents a quandary. Unlike with William Wilberforce there is no obvious ‘conversion’ moment, and there is limited evidence of his early faith. When searching for the origins of Perceval’s piety we therefore begin with his family and education. This section argues that his grandfather mattered more than his father in the formation of Perceval’s piety, and that his schooling and university experiences probably had a spiritual impact, though their chief significance was in forming social connections. His early career, as a lawyer and a politician, benefited from his mother’s family, the Comptons, and shows Perceval’s development as a Pittite. Significantly his legal profession, not his personal faith, became the chief object of ridicule; indeed he was praised for his biblical studies. These strands explain where Perceval’s beliefs derived from, and the political context in which they were formed.

In 1770, when Perceval was eight, his father, John Perceval, 2nd Earl of Egmont, died. The lack of familial correspondence between Perceval and his parents makes it impossible to fully discern the influence of his family on his beliefs. We know little about his parents’

influence. We know that Perceval viewed his elder brother, Lord Arden, as a father figure.⁶ Perceval followed his father's interest in antiquarian subjects, facilitating the British Museum's purchase of the Lansdowne manuscripts and of the Greville mineral collections.⁷ This appears to have instilled a conservatism also evidenced by his son John Perceval, who remembered the family habit of referencing old sayings and customs because of their antiquity.⁸ His mother's family, the Comptons, were subsequently useful in securing for Perceval the constituency of Northampton, but not obviously in shaping his personal beliefs. We can therefore only make inferences. The Perceval family history published in 1742 did detail their seventeenth-century struggles in Ireland during the Catholic rebellion, lamented the failure of the Irish Reformation, praised the Cromwellian transplanting of the Irish population into Connaught, and criticised Catholicism.⁹ Perceval's grandfather, John Perceval, 1st Earl of Egmont, had been noted as a veritable 'communion hunter'. A steadfast opponent in 1733 of repealing the Test Act, Egmont downplayed the Catholic numerical predominance in Ireland.¹⁰ He would happily spend an evening discussing with bishops his proposed changes to the prayers in the liturgy.¹¹ Plainly therefore Perceval's Anglicanism was partly a matter of inheritance.

⁶ King's College London – Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Maurice 1/5: Perceval to Spencer Perceval the Younger, 26 Oct. 1810.

⁷ Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, OSB MSS 54 Box 2, Folder 51: John Eardley-Wilmot to Perceval, 14 Apr. 1807; OSB MSS 54, Box 3, Folder 110: Perceval to Charles Abbot, 19 Apr. 1807; TNA PRO 30/9/15: Perceval to Abbot, 15 Apr. 1807; *Colchester*, ii, pp. 121, 239.

⁸ J. Perceval, *A Narrative of the Treatment Experienced by a Gentleman, during the State of Mental Derangement designed to explain the Causes and the Nature of Insanity* 2nd edn (London, 1844), p. 339.

⁹ J. Anderson, *A Genealogical History of the House of Yvery, in its Different Branches of Yvery, Luvel, Perceval and Gournay* (2 vols., London, 1742), i, pp. 22, 26, 178, 242-3, 342.

¹⁰ [J. Perceval], *The Controversy in Relation to the Test and Corporation Acts Clearly disputed, in a Dialogue between a Dissenter and a Member of the Establish'd Church* (London, 1733).

¹¹ *HMC Egmont Diary* (3 vols., London, 1920-3), i, pp. xvi; ii, p. 263; iii, p. 316-17.

Complementing Perceval's family was his education, undertaken at Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge.¹² Generally Harrow in the 1770s is viewed as mired in quasi-anarchical unrest. This disquiet dated from the contentious election of Benjamin Heath as headmaster in 1771, exacerbated by Heath's replacing the traditional silver arrow shooting competition with a speech-day. Given that Perceval was made a monitor (an Harrovian prefect), one of only six per year, he presumably avoided the school rebellion of 1776-7.¹³ We can infer that the adult Perceval did not view Harrow as a den of sin: Heath was Perceval's candidate to be Provost of Eton in 1809, though George III ultimately chose Joseph Goodall.¹⁴ The assistant master and later headmaster Joseph Drury was subsequently rewarded with a prebend at Wells Cathedral, and potentially might have been granted more had he lived.¹⁵ Perceval also sent his sons Spencer and Henry to Harrow. Classics dominated the curriculum, and Perceval achieved academic success.¹⁶ Drury recalled that Perceval was disciplined in focusing on perfecting classical composition.¹⁷ Posthumously, Latin verses allegedly by Perceval were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹⁸ Harrow helped Perceval forge life-long friendships with Dudley Ryder (later Earl of Harrowby) and Matthew Montagu. The former friendship was between mutually-minded Pittites, who both advocated

¹² The best accounts of Harrow in this period are C. Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School, 1324-1991* (Oxford, 2000) and P. Thornton, *Harrow School and its Surroundings* (London, 1885), pp. 164-214. For Cambridge J. Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989); P. Searby, *A History of the University of Cambridge Volume III 1750-1870* (Cambridge, 1997); M. Garland, *Cambridge Before Darwin: The Ideal of a Liberal Education 1800-1860* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 1-31.

¹³ Tyerman, *Harrow School, 1324-1991*, pp. 102-3; Harrowby MSS, Vol. III, fo. 219: Dudley to Elizabeth Ryder, 26 Nov. 1776.

¹⁴ BL, Add MS 37295, fo. 197: Perceval to Marquis Wellesley, 5 Dec. 1809; *LCGIII*, v, pp. 466-7.

¹⁵ *The Annual Biography and Obituary*, 19 (1835), pp. 32-3; 'Yorick', 'The Late Dr. Drury, of Harrow', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 157 (1835), p. 248.

¹⁶ *The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries of the Late Right Honourable John Wilson Croker*, ed. L. Jennings (3 vols., London, 1884), ii, pp. 340.

¹⁷ BL, Add MS 49191, fo. 39: Joseph Drury to Spencer Perceval the younger, 17 June 1812.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 110: J. Carey to Spencer Perceval the younger, 2 Sep. 1821.

church reform and slave trade abolition, whilst resisting Catholic Emancipation and parliamentary reform. Montagu, subsequently a supportive backbencher, furnishes us with a description of life at Harrow. He wrote to his aunt, the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu, that ‘we eat like plowmen [*sic*], and work like Philosophers, we play like school boys and when night comes sleep like dormice’.¹⁹

From Harrow Perceval, imitating Lord Arden, went in 1780 to one of Cambridge’s largest and most prestigious colleges, Trinity. Perceval’s evangelicalism has been attributed to his Cambridge education, which coincided with such luminaries as Isaac Milner and Charles Simeon.²⁰ This is not substantiated by contemporary evidence. That Perceval arrived with or developed piety at Cambridge is suggested by his possessing a copy of a sermon preached by the Revd Lambert on the ‘Lord’s Supper’.²¹ Lambert was sympathetic to anti-Trinitarian ideas,²² but Perceval evidently avoided the heterodoxy for which Trinity was known in the 1780s. He appears to have been taught by the Revd William Lort Mansel, whose orthodox principles secured him the Mastership of Trinity in 1798 to counteract radicalism and heterodoxy.²³ Alongside Mansel, Perceval was tutored by Thomas Mathias, for whom he had ‘very zealous regard’.²⁴ Mathias, a noted Italian linguist, subsequently acted as secretary to Queen Charlotte,²⁵ and shared Perceval’s interests, for example attending the inaugural meeting of the Anglican ‘National Institution’ of education, subsequently the National Society.²⁶ Mathias posthumously praised Perceval as ‘this great man’.²⁷

¹⁹ Huntington Library, California, MO 3819: Matthew to Elizabeth Montagu, 2 Feb. 1777.

²⁰ D. Gray, *Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister* (Manchester, 1963), p. 6.

²¹ BL, Add MS 49184, fo. 3-8: Sermon preached by Revd Mr Lambert.

²² Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Enlightenment*, pp. 225-7, 234.

²³ *LCGIII*, iii, p. 61.

²⁴ BL, Add MS 22976, fo. 57: Mansel to Mathias, 9 Oct. [1782].

²⁵ *LCGIII*, v, p. 617; CUL Add MS 8713/IX/A/1-21: Mathias’ correspondence with Perceval as secretary.

²⁶ C. Southey, *The Life of the Rev. Andrew Bell* (3 vols., London, 1844), ii, p. 340.

²⁷ A. Bray, *A Description of the Part of Devonshire bordering on the Tamar and the Tavy; its Natural History, Manners, Customs, Superstitions, Scenery, Antiquities, Biography of*

We only have one letter from Perceval's time at Cambridge, dated Tuesday 23 October 1781 to an unknown correspondent, who had produced a 'kind eulogy of me', including apparently, the claim that 'y^r comprehension far exceeds mine on any subject'. Its concerns are parochial, mainly focused on the correspondent's 'Punic odes' that had recently been published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.²⁸ In placing Perceval within the Pittite fold, Cambridge reinforced Harrow. Examining the privately printed Ryder papers – seemingly ignored by Gray – we discover that Perceval was a member of the inter-college Medley Club, dominated by Harrovians. As Dudley Ryder commented: 'It was a rather singular circumstance that of a Club limited to ten members, three Harrow men, – Spencer Perceval, Charles Yorke, & myself, – should have sat in Cabinet together.' The Medley continued once its members moved to London, falling off in 1786-7. Perceval's social ties to the Ryders at Cambridge mirror the connection of Canning with Liverpool at Christ Church (Oxford). These ties may have included interaction with Pitt. We know that Pitt visited his constituents biannually, thereby permitting Dudley Ryder to meet him.²⁹ Despite Gray's doubts these facts do add credence to John Perceval's claim that Cambridge initiated Perceval's acquaintance with Pitt.³⁰

If Harrow and Cambridge contributed something to Perceval's piety, it is unclear that his legal career did. It did bring praise, for in 1786 Burke's disciple William Windham opined that Perceval was 'from his quickness and acuteness, likely, I should think, to be some time or other a distinguished man'.³¹ Perceval worked the Midland circuit and on radical

Eminent Persons, &c &c in a Series of Letters to Robert Southey (3 vols., London, 1836), iii, p. 318.

²⁸ Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, Perceval B56: Perceval to ?, 23 [Oct.] 1781.

²⁹ G. Pryme, *Autobiographical Recollections of George Pryme* (London, 1870), p. 53; D. Ryder, *Reminiscences of Dudley, 2nd Earl of Harrowby* (privately printed, 1891), pp. 12-13.

³⁰ Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, p. 6; *The Croker Papers*, ii, p. 340.

³¹ *The Diary of the Right Hon. William Wyndham, 1784-1810*, ed. Mrs H. Baring (1866), p. 71.

prosecutions, including Tom Paine's for seditious libel. Perceval's deeds brought him to Pitt's attention and the offer, which he declined for family reasons, to be Chief Secretary to Ireland in 1795.³² The Comptons then helped him become MP for Northampton. Once in the Commons his standing rose because of his support for Pitt's policies, notably in demolishing Fox's opposition to the trebling of assessed taxes in 1798.³³ Pitt reportedly named Perceval as his preferred successor on his way to duel with Tierney.³⁴ Ironically Pitt's resignation in 1801 furthered Perceval's careers, creating the vacancy that made Perceval Solicitor-General, followed by Attorney-General in 1802. The travails of Henry Addington bolstered Perceval's reputation again as he battled to defend the failing prime minister in 1803-4, before serving in Pitt's second ministry.³⁵ It was only when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer, leader of the House of Commons, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in 1807 that Perceval decisively moved from a legal to a political career. From 1807, as we shall examine, Perceval began to wield influence over church patronage.

Perceval's legal career helped make him a Pittite. It also reveals public attitudes towards his piety. Strikingly the clerical satirist Sydney Smith was virtually alone in mocking Perceval's piety, whereas Wilberforce's religiosity was ridiculed. Instead Samuel Whitbread charged that Perceval was 'an adventurer from the Bar'. Insults relating to Perceval's legal career continued throughout his life and persisted posthumously, particularly accusing him of intellectual narrow-mindedness. Lord Buckinghamshire, later in Cabinet with Perceval, commented to Sidmouth, following Perceval's clumsy attempt to recruit Sidmouth's supporters to his government, that 'if he expects effectively to conduct the Government of

³² BL, Add MS 49184, fo. 24-31: Pitt to Perceval, 2 Jan. 1796 and 3 Jan. 1796, Perceval to Pitt, 3 Jan. 1796.

³³ *LCGIII*, iii, pp. 3-4.

³⁴ BL, Add MS 49189, fo. 5: *Memoirs &c &c* [of Perceval].

³⁵ *The Horner Papers*, eds. K Bourne and W. Bankes-Taylor (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 328, 330; R. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (5 vols., London, 1838), iii, p. 154.

this County, he must expand his mind beyond the narrow limits of the Inns of Court'. He later termed him, with faint praise, 'a cunning Lawyer, & a frank Man'.³⁶ Thomas Lawrence attributed Perceval's failure to purchase Elgin's marbles as resulting from his mind having been 'narrowed by Professional Habits (The Law), so as to be insensible to enlarged views of what it is proper for a great Empire to do with respect to the Arts'.³⁷ But Perceval was not only a man of law-books. He was evidently keen on the poetry of Dryden and Pope, quoting the latter to excellent effect against Whitbread.³⁸ He was interested in historical works. But his greatest interest was in religious subjects, especially biblical prophecy. The biographer of Canning, Stapleton, termed Perceval a 'scholar'.³⁹ What was the nature of this scholarship? Another Victorian writer on Perceval gives a valuable clue:

Mr. Perceval was a first-rate man of business, and also a scholar of profound erudition; in one branch of learning, too ... The late Duke of Sussex, it is well known, accumulated a splendid library, unrivalled in Bibles and theological treatises. What is still more singular, he read his books. His shelves at Kensington Palace contained a complete collection of the early Fathers, which he took great pleasure in perusing. 'I imbibed this taste,' he said to a friend who related the anecdote to the writer of this notice, 'from Mr. Perceval, who had them all at his fingers' ends, and I lit my little farthing candle at the blaze of his resplendent chandelier.'⁴⁰

³⁶ DRO C1809/OZ: Lord Buckinghamshire to Lord Sidmouth, 13 Oct. 1809; C1810/OZ: idem, 26 Sep. 1810.

³⁷ *Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. K. Cave (14 vols., London, 1979-84), x, p. 3676, xi, p. 3935.

³⁸ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 57, 63-4.

³⁹ A. Stapleton, *George Canning and his Times* (London, 1859), p. 182.

⁴⁰ J. Cole, 'An Episode in English History Assassination of Mr. Perceval in 1812', *Dublin University Magazine*, 62 (Aug., 1863), p. 188.

Aside from intellectual relaxation, these studies had a political significance, bolstering Perceval's Anglicanism and guiding his understanding of political events. But before considering that we will scrutinise the differing ways in which contemporaries described Perceval's beliefs, and his relationship with Evangelicals.

Perceval, the Clapham Sect, and the Hackney Phalanx

Perceval has traditionally been termed the 'Evangelical Prime Minister'. The next three sections contend that a better description is the 'Anglican Prime Minister'. This is demonstrated first by considering personal descriptions of Perceval's religious beliefs, including his own, and by examining Perceval's relations with the Clapham Sect and the high-Church Hackney Phalanx. The second section extends this argument by considering Perceval's own theological beliefs. This highlights the importance he attached to biblical prophecy and to Providence working in the world. The third section evaluates Perceval's dispensation of church patronage, which shows that he strove to be meritocratic and avoided partisanship towards evangelicals.

Let us begin with personal descriptions of Perceval's religiosity. All agreed that he was pious. Francis Horner opined that 'He is an intolerant, bigoted, narrowminded [sic] little fellow; and his proper vocation would have been a Canon of Christ Church' whilst acknowledging his private virtues, public courage and honesty.⁴¹ Whilst Smith alone mocked Perceval's faith, he was often accused of bigotry. A hostile obituary referred to his 'precise, religious zeal, approaching to the "odium theologicum"'.⁴² Five months after his 'Canon of

⁴¹ *Horner Papers*, p. 518.

⁴² [Anon], 'Monthly Retrospect of Politics', *The Belfast Monthly Magazine*, 8 (1812), p. 408.

Christ Church' comment, Horner quipped about Perceval's likely rise to the premiership: 'the reign of the Saints never was so near'.⁴³ Fox's friend Dr Parr sneered to Romilly about 'Saint Perceval'.⁴⁴ Smith contemptuously referred to the 'little Methodist',⁴⁵ and the '*evangelical* Perceval'.⁴⁶ The Whiggish Lord William Bentinck, minister to Sicily from 1811, had Perceval in mind when he railed against 'the cant of our political Methodists'.⁴⁷

However, Horner's remarks about Perceval's suitability for a canonry of Christ Church can be interpreted differently: it echoes the 'high-Church' label his opponents often attached to him. Henry Brougham, writing in post-Tractarian times when such labels had acquired added potency, compared Perceval to James Stephen: 'although the one [Perceval] leant towards the High Church party, and the other [Stephen] was a Low Churchman'.⁴⁸ Macaulay, championing Whig Irish Church reform, referred to Perceval as 'a leader of the high Church party'.⁴⁹ We need not rely on descriptions from the 1830s. The high-Church terminology was echoed by Thomas Grenville eight days before Perceval's assassination, referring to 'himself and his High Church' pursuing negotiations with Catholic bishops to strengthen his ability to resist Catholic Emancipation.⁵⁰ This nomenclature points to a crucial point about Perceval – that he was staunchly committed to the Church of England. Thus Sydney Smith described Perceval as the captain of an assailed ship who 'exhorts the Episcopal gunner not to trust the Presbyterian quarter-master ... rushes through blood and brains, examining his men in the Catechism and Thirty-nine Articles, and positively forbids

⁴³ *Horner Papers*, p. 533.

⁴⁴ S. Romilly, *The Memoirs of the Life of Sir Samuel Romilly* (3 vols., London, 1840), ii, p. 260.

⁴⁵ *Letters of Sydney Smith*, ed. N. Smith (2 vols., Oxford, 1953), i, p. 197.

⁴⁶ S. Smith, *The Letters of Peter Plymley* (London, 1852), p. 58.

⁴⁷ J. Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck: The Making of a Liberal Imperialist 1774-1839* (London, 1974), p. 110.

⁴⁸ H. Brougham, *Statesmen of the Time of George III* (2 vols., London, 1839), i, p. 251.

⁴⁹ *Hansard*, 3rd series, 1833, xvi, 1389.

⁵⁰ *HMC Fortescue*, x, p. 242.

every one to sponge or ram who has not taken the Sacrament according to the Church of England'.⁵¹ A positive eulogy by William Van Mildert, later the high-Church Prince-Bishop of Durham, praised Perceval's 'steadfast adherence to the Apostolical doctrine and discipline of our Ecclesiastical Establishment'.⁵² Both Smith and Van Mildert were clerics and therefore have a special claim to be trusted in their theological assessments.

Perceval's own assessment naturally situated himself between those charging him 'as a fanatic' and the complaint that 'Dissenters are pelting me as a High Church Bigot ... vanity is alert enough to hail the two Charges as a proof of moderation'.⁵³ However, others testify to the high-Church accusation. The radical Cambridge journalist Benjamin Flower, lacerating Perceval's friendship with Wilberforce, snarled that:

the course they pursued respecting Lord Cochrane's motion prove how admirably the *high-church*, and the *evangelical* professor agreed; how perfectly they were versed in the school of those famous christians the *Jesuits*; we doubt not, but that with a little more practice Mr. Percival will prove as *evangelical*, and as *vital* a christian as Mr. Wilberforce himself!⁵⁴

Perceval also warned against conflating zeal with 'Calvinistic schismatics', expressly regretting that 'so many a good Churchman, who is rather more zealous, than the ordinary run of his Brethren is too often stigmatised as a Methodist'.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Smith, *Peter Plymley*, pp. 28-9.

⁵² W. Van Mildert, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's-Inn...on the occasion of the Assassination of the Right Hon. Spencer Perceval* (London, 1812), p. 12.

⁵³ BL, Add MS 49185, fo. 92: Perceval to Mansel, 6 Feb. 1812.

⁵⁴ *Flower's Political review and Monthly Register*, 2 (1807), p. x.

⁵⁵ Carlisle Archives, Lowther Papers, MSS D Lons/L1/2/15: Perceval to Lord Lonsdale, 21 Oct. 1809.

As the introduction showed Gray asserted rather than demonstrated Perceval's notional evangelicalism.⁵⁶ In examining Perceval's notional 'evangelicalism' we must consider his links with the most well-known group of evangelical politicians of his age, the Clapham Sect, nicknamed the 'Saints'. Perceval did not share the Clapham Sect's willingness to legislate against animal cruelty, abolish the lottery, or enthusiasm for 'economical reform' as championed by Henry Banks. With the non-parliamentary 'Saints' Perceval had limited contact. No correspondence with Hannah More has been found. His communications with Zachary Macaulay were solely about abolition. Charles Grant MP, Chairman of the East India Company, confessed to Wilberforce in 1808 to having 'so little acquaintance with' Perceval, thus needing Wilberforce's help.⁵⁷ Perceval did grant a client of Lord Teignmouth a West Indian job, albeit not the one originally requested, and rented Teignmouth's house in Clapham for a year.⁵⁸ But Perceval soon moved to Ealing. Perceval certainly appreciated the Saints' leading MP, William Wilberforce. They corresponded frequently, and socialised. Thus in November 1807 Wilberforce reported that he conversed with Perceval, and 'talked with him freely on 'sume superbiam [pride, using a classical allusion to Horace]' &c'.⁵⁹ Perceval valued Wilberforce's influence in the House of Commons, writing to him on the Maynooth question in 1807: 'For one word from you will have ten times the weight of anything which can fall from me upon such a subject'.⁶⁰ In 1809 he realistically recognised the need for the Saints' support, despite Eldon's disapproval.⁶¹ Perceval and Wilberforce did,

⁵⁶ See page 36.

⁵⁷ *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, eds. R. and S. Wilberforce (2 vols., London, 1840), ii, p. 31.

⁵⁸ CUL BSA/F3/Shore, fo. 136: Perceval to Lord Teignmouth, 11 June 1810; Lord Teignmouth, *Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of John Lord Teignmouth* (2 vols., London, 1843), ii, p. 124.

⁵⁹ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 348.

⁶⁰ Duke University, Wilberforce Papers: Perceval to Wilberforce, 10 July 1807.

⁶¹ Holland (Perceval) Papers IX.11: Lord Eldon to Perceval, 15 Oct. 1809; IX.12: Perceval to Eldon, nd [19? Oct. 1809].

however, disagree. Wilberforce's voting for Maddock's motion – which charged Perceval with corruption – earned him the enmity of Perceval's daughter Fanny, an outrage heightened by Perceval's 'esteem and respect' for Wilberforce.⁶² This juvenile animosity was shared by politicians. Wilberforce admitted in 1810 that he had 'become very obnoxious to their [ministers'] warm friends from having so often opposed Perceval'.⁶³ But following Perceval's death Wilberforce heaped copious praise. Perceval's generosity, Wilberforce wrote, was 'unbounded'. He possessed 'such kindness of heart, so much feeling, and all based upon true religious principles. I believe he was a man of prayer'.⁶⁴ Perceval's salvation, to Wilberforce, was more certain than for anyone else he knew.⁶⁵ These close ties with Wilberforce were shared with James Stephen. Stephen corresponded regularly with Perceval on colonial matters and Stephen owed his seat and a position in the Court of Chancery to Perceval. Therefore, Perceval's ties were with the politicians among the 'Saints', not the whole coterie. He only briefly lived in Clapham, he disagreed with several of their political ideas, while on the other side Wilberforce supported a notably anti-Perceval parliamentary motion.

The absence of comparable politicians helps explain Perceval's lack of connections with the high-Church Hackney Phalanx group. Christopher Wordsworth, chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury and brother of the poet William, unsuccessfully endeavoured to use the Primate to secure Perceval's support, and hence Mansel's vote, for a Cambridge professorship for which Christopher Wordsworth was competing.⁶⁶ With the leading figures, such as Henry Handley Norris or Joshua Watson no direct communications exist. Perceval

⁶² King's College London – Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Maurice 1/4: Fanny Perceval to Spencer Perceval the Younger, May 1809.

⁶³ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 439.

⁶⁴ J. Harsford, *Recollections of William Wilberforce, during nearly thirty years* (London, 1864), p. 18.

⁶⁵ Harrowby MSS, Vol. V, fo. 107: Henry to Dudley Ryder, 22 May 1812.

⁶⁶ BL, Add MS 46136, fo: 200-4: Wordsworth to Henry Handley Norris, nd (c. Nov. 1809), 23 and 29 Nov. 1809.

supported their efforts with the National Society, promoting Anglican education; and differed from the Clapham Sect in being, from 1799, a member of the staunchly Anglican Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK).⁶⁷ Contrastingly Isaac Milner, despite his ecclesiastical and university positions, was threatened with blackballing ‘upon some dislike of his supposed opinions, and his intimacy with Wilberforce’.⁶⁸ However, controversially, Perceval did belong to the non-denominational British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS): the Society’s Secretary John Owen praised Perceval’s intervention ensuring that their circulation of Irish bibles was not impeded by renewal of the Grierson family’s patent for the King’s works.⁶⁹ The patent itself was supported by Wellesley Pole as permitting cheap editions of the scriptures to be produced.⁷⁰ Perceval’s views echoed his family’s. Distributing the Bible to convert the Irish enjoyed the advocacy of Lord Redesdale,⁷¹ and Jane Perceval helped circulate religious tracts.⁷² This commitment to biblical distribution, rather than affection for cross-denominational efforts, suffused Mansel’s sceptical response to Christopher Wordsworth’s anti-BFBS pamphlet in 1810.⁷³ That Perceval sympathised with Mansel’s standpoint is demonstrated by his agreement with Vansittart during his 1811-12 publishing clash with another anti-BFBS high-Churchman, Herbert Marsh, though remaining amicable with the latter.⁷⁴ Socially therefore Perceval was closer to the Clapham Sect than the Hackney

⁶⁷ G. Pelham, *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, London: on Thursday, May 30, 1805. Being the Time of the Yearly Meeting of the Children Educated in the Charity-Schools, in and about the Cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1805), p. 69.

⁶⁸ *Colchester*, ii, p. 363.

⁶⁹ J. Owen, *History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (New York, 1817), p. 416.

⁷⁰ PRONI T3228/5/7: Wellesley Pole to Richard Ryder, 30 June 1810.

⁷¹ *Private Papers of William Wilberforce*, ed. A. Wilberforce (London, 1897), pp. 113-15.

⁷² Fitzwilliam B62: J. Skynner to Jane Perceval, 5 Aug. 1803 [?].

⁷³ BL, Add MS 49185, fo. 71: Mansel to Perceval, 31 July 1810.

⁷⁴ Churchill College Archives, VSNT/II/7/3, fo. 3: Perceval to Vansittart, 17 Dec. 1811; H. Marsh, *An Inquiry into the Consequences of Neglecting to Give the Prayer Book with the Bible Interspersed with Remarks on some Late Speeches at Cambridge and other important matter relative to the British and Foreign Bible Society* 4th edn (London, 1812), p. 54.

Phalanx, but far from synonymous with them. Revealingly, during the 1811-12 clash Isaac Milner urged Wilberforce ‘to prevent the effect of [Marsh’s] mischief on Perceval’s mind’; Milner was clearly worried about Perceval’s commitment to the BFBS. This tincture of doubt testifies to how Perceval was perceived primarily as an Anglican. His membership of both the SPCK and the BFBS suggests a man keen to avoid taking sides, pragmatic about the difficulties of bolstering Christianity overseas, but not a steadfast partisan and polemicist for or against each organisation.

Perceval’s theological views

We have seen how Perceval’s social ties, self-description, and characterisation by others support the notion of his being transcendently Anglican. Let us now turn to his religious beliefs, expressed in his prayers, letters, pamphlet, and speeches. These highlight three prominent features of his faith. First, his prayers show his staunch Anglicanism. This is reinforced by his readership of the high-Church *Orthodox Churchman’s Magazine*. Second, his pamphlet on the Book of Daniel and his personal letters demonstrate the significance of biblical prophecy to Perceval’s world-view. Third, his speeches testify to how Perceval saw Providence working in the world. These beliefs distinguished Perceval from other Pittites and influenced, as subsequent chapters will further demonstrate, the policies he pursued.

Let us begin by considering Perceval’s prayers, a source unused by previous biographers. These are often strikingly similar to the Anglican liturgy. One prayer was a personalised version of the Anglican confession commencing Sunday services. Several of his prayers had a patriotic tinge, calling for God’s support for the nation, including:

Lord avert the Evils which threaten our Country, abate the pride of our enemies, assuage their malice and confound their Devices – arm our Rulers with wisdom and our people with valour and fidelity and all with such sure trust and confidence in thee, that fighting under thy banner, for thy Glory and the maintenance of our Religion, we may obtain thy protection and pass our time in rest and quietness, setting an example of Piety & Repentance to surrounding nations and future generations.⁷⁵

Complementing these prayers was Perceval's wider interest in theology. We find Perceval discussing with the Oxford antiquarian and clergyman Robert Finch the question of re-baptism and its incompatibility with canon law.⁷⁶ He and Jane Perceval subscribed for two translations each of the theological works of the seventeenth-century French Bishop Fenelon.⁷⁷ We find him ordering five copies of the obscure *A Vindication of the Texts objected to by Ward and the English Version of the Scriptures*.⁷⁸ His greatest interest lay in questions of biblical prophecy and the role of Providence in the world and this shall be considered in more detail, highlighting how these ideas were intertwined with his political actions.

The defeat of Napoleon at Acre in 1799 represented the first check in his illustrious military career. It proved a momentary setback, unimportant in his eventual rise to become Emperor. This was not how contemporaries perceived it. Perceval produced a pamphlet, which argued that prophecies detailed in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Daniel were coming true. Two major assumptions underpinned Perceval's argument. The first assumption

⁷⁵ BL, Add MS 47210, fo. 5-6: 36, Perceval's prayers.

⁷⁶ Bodleian, Finch d.7, fo. 239: Finch to Perceval nd.

⁷⁷ L. Marshall (trans.), *Extracts from the Religious Works of Mons^r François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon Archbishop of Cambray* (London, 1809), p. ix.

⁷⁸ Bodleian, Curzon Collection b. 27: Perceval to Messrs Cadell and Dawes, 19 Sep. 1811.

was that the Pope was mentioned in the prophecy, thereby linking Papal decline with the rise of French power. The second assumption was that the ‘King of the North’ referred to in the fortieth verse was France. Perceval contended that its ‘atheism’ and assaults on Papal power rendered this plausible. Perceval smoothed over problematic discrepancies between a literal reading of the text and actual events, such as Napoleon’s forces going to Egypt before Syria. He traced the rise of French power to its zenith at Acre. Admiral Sidney Smith’s letter to Nelson about that event furnished a brilliant phrase for quotation: ‘The plain of Nazareth has been the boundary of Buonaparte’s extraordinary career’. Thereafter French fortunes had declined. The War of the Second Coalition had reversed previous French victories. Closing, Perceval added a tantalising hint that, given French interconnection with the Holy Land, the return of the Jews there might follow, which ‘will be nearly contemporary with the final destruction of Papal Power’. Unmentioned was that this would precede the Second Coming.⁷⁹

Perceval’s prophetic studies were partly an intellectual exercise. The pamphlet’s postscript was devoted to discussing the Elizabethan scholar and millenarian Joseph Mede’s *Exposition of the Seven Phials in the Revelations*.⁸⁰ Perceval later described his prophetic studies as having occurred ‘for some time, with what profit I know not, but certainly with the greatest entertainment to myself’.⁸¹ A few surviving letters suggest that Perceval was similarly familiar with contemporary writers such as George Faber and Joseph Galloway, lending their pamphlets to brother-in-law and fellow prophecy enthusiast Thomas Walpole. Together they considered the possible date of the Second Coming, Walpole favouring 1926.⁸² But Perceval’s prophetic studies also had a political edge. This was especially true of letters

⁷⁹ S. Perceval, *Observations Intended to Point Out the Application of a Prophecy in the Eleventh Chapter of the Book of Daniel to the French Power* (1800), pp. 11-12, 15-19, 26, 35-6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

⁸¹ Holland (Perceval) Papers XXVII.134: Perceval to Bosanquet, nd.

⁸² BL, Add MS 88914/2: Walpole to Perceval, 2 July 1806.

he drafted to the *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine* defending the value of prophetic studies. First, that Perceval read this publication stresses his proximity to mainstream establishmentarianism. Secondly, they articulate Perceval's reasons for commending prophecy. The least important was in 'giving a new zeal to the Study of History, and a peculiar interest to the observation of the great events which are passing in the world'. The study gave Christians consolation amid calamity, impressed upon them the power of God over all events, even in 'making his Enemies his instruments'. Moreover it held forth 'the prospect which it seems to afford by the further demonstration of the accomplishment of Prophecies which have been completed and are completing in the world, of extending the belief of the Gospel over every description of unbeliever'. He defended prophecy against charges of enthusiasm, of being discredited through previous failure to come true, and of being unintelligible.⁸³ Thus Perceval perceived past and current events through prophetic eyes. Notably the idea of conversion, which he championed for Irish Catholics, West Indian slaves, and non-Christian Indians, had millenarian overtones.

Biblical prophecy entrenched in Perceval's mind the notion of Providence at work in the world, impacting the fate of nations. This idea was frequently reiterated in connection with the war. Reflecting on the travails of Britain in December 1806, Perceval declared: 'Those who lament over our Calamities, let them look abroad, let them look abroad – Let them look to every nation in the east, and in humble adoration, to the God of all mercies, bend in gratitude to him for the mercies we experience'. To counteract the claim of Providential favour to France on land, manifested in her victories on terra firma, Perceval counterpoised: 'we may shew them a picture of successes which the arm of God is more visible, in the scene of his great wonders where there is so much which human Counsel

⁸³ BL, Add MS 88914/26, fo. 1-36: Letters on Prophecy, 1805. An earlier letter was published in the *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine*, 8 (1805), pp. 40-3.

cannot control, where winds & storms and elements do so much, which man can neither govern nor influence'.⁸⁴ He recapitulated these views in March 1807, speculating that 'the French nation, is let loose upon mankind as the Scourge of Providence', reaffirming British maritime success in contradistinction to French land victories. Most interestingly Perceval declared that Britons needed to 'well examine, whether there are such faults & vices, amongst ourselves'. He identified, as potential causes of Divine punishment: 'the Existence of the Slave Trade ... [and] the neglect of our Religion, perhaps amongst ourselves but unquestionably in those large halves of the world, which are under our dominion are of that description'.⁸⁵ Similarly, in 1811, the struggles of Wellington were placed into the hands of God. Awaiting news from Portugal, Perceval wrote: 'What may be the end of that formidable approach of the two armies in Portugal no man can say the Event is in the hands of the Giver of all Victory, & there we must be content to leave it.' Once the victory was obtained Wellington was lauded as 'the happy Instrument under Heaven'. The victory was described as 'the singular blessing, which it has pleased God to confer upon this nation & its arms'.⁸⁶ His reported words moving the vote of thanks for Wellington and his army were equally saturated with Providential fervour:

Sir, it was impossible to suppose that it could be the divine intention of Providence long to permit the continuance of that system of oppression and usurpation under which Europe has so long groaned. It may, perhaps, not be presumptuous in us to hope that we may be the instruments of delivering the world from its thralldom. It is not impossible in the dispensations of Providence, but that in that very peninsula

⁸⁴ BL, Add MS 49180, fo. 251-2, 255: draft speech for 20 Dec. 1806.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Add MS 49177, fo. 15-6: draft speech for Mar. 1807.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Add MS 49181, fo. 108, 116, 118: speech drafts from early 1811 and for 26 Apr. 1811.

in which the tyranny of France has been so cruelly manifested, she may receive her death-wound if not her grave.⁸⁷

Invoking providential intercession was indisputably part of contemporary rhetoric. Canning termed Wellington ‘as the instrument in the hands of Providence for the deliverance of Portugal’. Grattan mentioned Providence four times, God four times, and ‘the Author of the Universe’ in one paragraph whilst advocating Catholic Emancipation.⁸⁸ Boyd Hilton has highlighted the frequent references to Providence and God among abolitionist speakers such as Canning and Pitt not known for their personal piety.⁸⁹ A cynic would say that these references are trite phrases signifying nothing. But equally one could point to Wilberforce’s description of Napoleon in early 1808 ‘This man is manifestly an instrument in the hands of Providence; when God has done with him, He will probably show how easily He can get rid of him. Meanwhile may we be of the number of those who trust in Him, and all will be well.’⁹⁰ As with Perceval it seems implausible that so pious a man was being insincere within the privacy of his own diary. Two more examples of Perceval’s might suffice. Following the peace preliminaries with France in 1801, Perceval gloomily ended a letter to Dudley Ryder: ‘But however our only comfort is that we are in better hands than our own, which will work out somehow or other good out of it all for those who deserve it, and I wish & pray to God that we may be of that number’.⁹¹ A final example, ironically, arose from Whitbread’s fulminating against those urging Napoleon’s assassination, suggesting that if he was God’s

⁸⁷ *PD*, 1811, xix, 771.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, xix, 772; xx, 377-8.

⁸⁹ B. Hilton, ‘1807 and All That: why Britain outlawed her Slave Trade’, in D. Peterson (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Athens, Ohio, 2010), pp. 77-9.

⁹⁰ Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 397.

⁹¹ Harrowby MSS, Vol. VIII, fo. 150: Perceval to Dudley Ryder, 25 Oct. 1801.

agent then Providence would protect him. Perceval's reply disowned fatalism whilst suggesting that Britain too was under divine influence:

He also perfectly agreed with the hon. gent., that when Providence distinctly assumed the direction of great events, for ultimate purposes unknown and incomprehensible, no short-sighted human effort could retard their progress; but this sentiment ought to be well guarded, and ought not to be permitted in its operation to prevent our resistance to immediate evil. Even if it were declared by Omniscience, that the plans of Buonaparté would be and must be finally executed, yet if they could not be carried into execution without a violation of rights which ought to be defended, it was our duty to make an effort to defend them, however hopeless. Nothing could be more dangerous than to misapply the truth, that all events were under the direction of Providence. It was in the defence of liberty against oppression, that human virtue was most eminently displayed; and those who perished in such a sacred cause, perished gloriously, and not without reward. Irresistible as the course of Buonaparté had hitherto appeared to be, if we indeed thought that Providence superintended human events, we must be convinced that in that course he would yet be checked. This country might be chosen as the instrument of arresting his mighty progress – of deducing good out of the evil which had hitherto existed.

What was there, he would ask, in the march of Buonaparté, which ought to induce us to suppose that his ultimate success was irresistibly decreed by Providence? Let this country look to its own exertions, and say whether the success of those exertions had not been as extraordinary as the success of the exertions of the enemy. If it were declared that a superintending Providence had

given to France the dominion of the land, it must also be declared that the same superintending Providence had given to Great Britain the dominion of the sea. The future presented cheerful as well as grave subjects for contemplation. Whatever might be the result, however, it became us, under every variety of circumstances, to choose the noble path of duty and honour.⁹²

Both Gray and Hilton cited Perceval's interest in biblical prophecy to emphasise his evangelicalism.⁹³ One admirer of Perceval's pamphlet was the Evangelical abolitionist campaigner Granville Sharp.⁹⁴ However, biblical prophecy and millenarian impulses were not the preserve of evangelicals, or of eccentrics such as Joanna Southcott or Richard Brothers.⁹⁵ Aside from his brother-in-law Perceval also corresponded with the educationalist (and brother of the Sunday School movement's founder) Richard Raikes.⁹⁶ Bishop Samuel Horsley, the high-Churchman Robert Nares, and Joseph Priestley, the radical Unitarian and discoverer of oxygen, all took an interest in millenarian subjects, building on the precedent of Isaac Newton. In Irish Parliamentary debates on the Union Francis Dobbs opposed Union as impious, citing those classic texts of millenarians, the books of Daniel and Revelation.⁹⁷ Prophetical ideas swayed international rulers such as the Prince of Hesse and Gustavus III of Sweden.⁹⁸ Perceval's prophetic studies were not considered unusual by contemporaries.

⁹² *PD*, 1811, xx, 781.

⁹³ Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, p. 18.; B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1988), p. 219.

⁹⁴ P. Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq* (London, 1820), p. 461.

⁹⁵ C. Leighton, 'Antichrist's Revolution: Some Anglican Apocalypticists in the Age of the French Wars', *Journal of Religious History*, 24 (2000), pp. 125-42.

⁹⁶ Holland (Perceval) Papers Appendix A: 'Letters marked on the list of 1906 as having been destroyed', pp. 76, 80.

⁹⁷ C. Garnett, *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (London, 1975), p. 118.

⁹⁸ J. Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions 1783-1793* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 184.

William Van Mildert opaquely referred, in his post-assassination sermon, to Perceval ‘occasionally extending his researches into the more difficult departments of biblical inquiry’.⁹⁹ Perceval’s ideas about prophecy and Providence, as shall see throughout this thesis, distinguished him from other Pittites, both pious and impious, but they defined his Anglicanism rather than any evangelicalism.

Church Patronage

Gareth Atkins’ recent work on evangelicalism has stressed the importance of patronage, including in the Church, in creating ‘this pious nexus’.¹⁰⁰ Conversely Lord Liverpool was accused by Wilberforce of opposing evangelical candidates for clerical patronage. This section will show that Perceval had no partisan bias towards evangelicals in the appointments he made or recommended. To understand the limitations on Perceval’s actions the section begins by detailing how the administration of church patronage worked. Perceval fitted within a system where various interested parties – notably lay patrons, George III, and other politicians – all had influence. Having contextualised Perceval’s actions, his even-handedness towards evangelical and high-Church clerics will be demonstrated. Finally, it will engage with the historiographical question of when church patronage shifted towards a more ‘meritocratic’ approach. William Gibson has situated this transition during Liverpool’s premiership, but Perceval presaged this shift and anticipated several of Liverpool’s early clerical appointments.

Historiographically Hanoverian church patronage has received uneven treatment. Scrutiny of evangelical involvement in church patronage has invariably come from the

⁹⁹ Van Mildert, *Assassination of the Right Hon. Spencer Perceval*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁰ G. Atkins, ‘Wilberforce and his Milieux: The Worlds of Anglican Evangelicalism, c.1780-1830’, (Cambridge Univ. PhD thesis, 2009), pp. 6, 99.

evangelical angle rather than the governmental perspective, notably in Gareth Atkins' PhD thesis on evangelical networks.¹⁰¹ Both Atkins and Reider Payne tend to be bottom-up rather than top-down, approaching patronage from the perspective of evangelical clergy or politicians, or landed proprietors and their clients. The Duke of Newcastle's church patronage was thoroughly scrutinised by Stephen Taylor, while several scholars have analysed the patronage policies of Victorian premiers.¹⁰² But biographies of Perceval's contemporaries, Lord Grenville and the Duke of Portland, have neglected their church patronage, despite Grenville's sizeable array of mainly Oxford-connected clerical correspondents.¹⁰³ Payne's thesis on church patronage (mainly on the patronage of landed families for non-episcopal positions) does touch on Lord North,¹⁰⁴ and highlights the Cambridge axis of Pitt and Pretyman that dominated church patronage during Pitt's premiership.¹⁰⁵ Pitt stated that 'ecclesiastical preferment is the greatest plague I have', and according to Michael Duffy perceived church patronage in political terms, only naming a candidate's patron, not the candidate himself, when recommending to George III. This political patronage was evident in William Buller being made Dean of Exeter immediately before the 1784 election, ensuring his family's Parliamentary support – which continued with Buller's promotion to the bishopric of Exeter in 1792.¹⁰⁶ When considering the context of Perceval's own church

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 20-7, 96-103.

¹⁰² S. Taylor, 'Church and State in England in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: The Newcastle Years 1742-1762', (Cambridge Univ. PhD thesis, 1987); P. Welch, 'Blomfield and Peel: A study in Co-operation between Church and State, 1841-1846', *JEH*, 12 (1961), pp. 71-84; E. Brynn, 'Robert Peel and the Church of Ireland', *JRH*, 7 (1973), pp. 191-207; Scotland, *Palmerston and the Bench of Bishops*; W. Gibson, 'Disraeli's Church Patronage: 1868-1880', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 61 (1992), pp. 197-210; idem, '"A Great Excitement" Gladstone and Church Patronage 1860-1894', *ibid.*, 68 (1999), pp. 372-96.

¹⁰³ P. Jupp, *Lord Grenville 1759-1834* (Oxford, 1985); D. Wilkinson, *The Duke of Portland: politics and party in the age of George III* (Basingstoke, 2003). Grenville's ecclesiastical correspondence can mainly be found at BL Add MS 59001-3.

¹⁰⁴ R. Payne 'Church Patronage Networks below the Episcopacy [sic] 1770-1801', (London Univ. PhD thesis, 2007), pp. 215-23.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 212, 314-16, 327-8.

¹⁰⁶ M. Duffy, *Younger Pitt* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 41, 111.

patronage the long shadow of Pitt must be recalled. This section will incorporate evangelical appointments within Perceval's wider church patronage, and provide a top-down view on church patronage that will expand the limited scholarship on war-time Pittite patronage.

If Perceval did not overtly favour evangelical clergy, how can we characterise his patronage? This section will also argue that Perceval's non-partisan approach reflected a more meritocratic approach. The idea of church patronage as transitioning from being driven by political considerations to a non-partisan, meritocratic selection of bishops has been dated by William Gibson to Liverpool's ministry.¹⁰⁷ Peter Jupp reckoned this continued under the Duke of Wellington.¹⁰⁸ The historiography echoes changing contemporary opinions. One public correspondent in 1809 commented how:

even the Church patronage of the crown, is not always exempt, from the partialities and conveniences, to which the ministers in a government like ours are continually obliged to you you [Perceval] would often be obliged to do violence to your own feelings, by bestowing livings upon persons who had little to recommend them, but connections whose demands no minister can withstand.¹⁰⁹

Noticeably Perceval was not seen to wield influence over clerical patronage, demonstrating that Portland retained control. Writing in 1813, Sydney Smith, admittedly highly partial in his judgement, denounced '*that policy which has been so frequently pursued for these fifty years*

¹⁰⁷ W. Gibson, 'The Tories and Church Patronage: 1812-30', *JEH*, 41 (1990), pp. 266-74.

¹⁰⁸ P. Jupp, *British Politics on the Eve of Reform: The Duke of Wellington's Administration, 1828-30* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 48.

¹⁰⁹ Senex, *State of the Established Church; in a series of letters to the Right Hon. Spencer Perceval, Chancellor of the Exchequer &c &c &c* 1st edn (London, 1809), p. 17.

*past, of placing men of mean, or middling abilities, in high ecclesiastical stations’.*¹¹⁰ This contrasts with Liverpool’s self-satisfied remark to Wilberforce in 1820:

It must be a great satisfaction to us all to have observed the great improvement which has taken place in the Clergy of the Established Church in the course of the last twenty, and even ten, years; the Duties of Religion are performed both in the Metropolis and in those parts of the Country with which I am acquainted in quite a different manner to what they were when I first came into the world ... The Bane some years past was the worldly habits of the Clergy. They seemed ashamed of their calling, but now it is found that the best educated are amongst the most correct.¹¹¹

Liverpool also grandly claimed in January 1821 that ‘The Patronage of the Church never has been admitted by me to be a Branch of Political Patronage.’¹¹² Philip Harling has interpreted Liverpool’s government as marking a wider moment of transition, when ‘Old Corruption’ declined prior to the *coup de grâce* of the Whigs post-1830.¹¹³ Changing attitudes to church patronage under Liverpool therefore presaged circumstances where even the worldly Lord Palmerston wrote:

I have never considered ecclesiastical appointments as patronage to be given away for grace and favour, and for personal or political objects ... I have always

¹¹⁰ S. Smith, *The Works of Sydney Smith* (London, 1869), p. 244; original emphasis.

¹¹¹ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, p. 261.

¹¹² J. Dinwiddy, ‘The “Influence of the Crown” in the Early Nineteenth Century: A Note on the Opposition Case’, *Parliamentary History*, 4 (1985), p. 199.

¹¹³ P. Harling, *The Waning of “Old Corruption”: The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford, 1996); R. Saunders, ‘The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820-1832 (Book Review)’, *EHR*, 126 (2011), pp. 1480-1.

endeavoured, to choose the best man I could find, without any regard to the wishes of those who may have recommended candidates for choice.¹¹⁴

However, the interpretation of Liverpool's era as a time of change has been challenged in two ways. First, Disraeli claimed that Liverpool's idea of merit meant men being distinguished as 'a private tutor' or 'decent editorship of a Greek play'.¹¹⁵ Disraeli viewed the shift in patronage from aristocratic younger sons to aristocratic tutors as little improvement.¹¹⁶ Moreover, scholarship and diligence were not necessarily mutually compatible. Fox commented on Dr Joseph Stock's claim to an Irish bishopric:

As to his not attending much to the duty of a diocese where there are no Protestants, I do not value that much; while on the other hand I do value very highly his learning and particularly his edition of Demosthenes. If I had my own way, except in very particular cases, I never would make a man a bishop, who was not eminent in some branch of learning. I do not care which, but classical learning is of course my favourite.¹¹⁷

This 'Greek-play' characterisation has in turn been criticised as inaccurate and a partisan invention.¹¹⁸ A second challenge has stressed the continuity between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Attitudes to church patronage depended a great deal on the context and

¹¹⁴ N. Scotland, *'Good and Proper Men' Lord Palmerston and the Bench of Bishops* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 29. See also J. Wolffe, 'Lord Palmerston and Religion: A Reappraisal', *EHR*, 120 (2005), pp. 907-36.

¹¹⁵ B. Disraeli, *Tancred: or, The New Crusade* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1847), i, p. 79.

¹¹⁶ B. Disraeli, *Coningsby or the New Generation*, intro. M. Elwin (London, 1968), p. 261.

¹¹⁷ *Memorials and correspondence of Charles James Fox*, ed. J. Russell (4 vols., London, 1853-7), iv, p. 144.

¹¹⁸ A. Burns and C. Stray, 'The Greek-Play Bishop: Polemic, Prosopography, and Nineteenth-Century Prelates', *HJ*, 54 (2011), pp. 1013-38.

personality of particular ministers.¹¹⁹ Taylor has presented a favourable view of the Duke of Newcastle's management of ecclesiastical positions.¹²⁰ Turning to the nineteenth century, William Gibson has, in other work, emphasised the continuity in ecclesiastical patronage practices, notably in Victorian clergy recommending themselves for bishoprics.¹²¹ Similarly, Liverpool's approach was not, and probably could not be, devoid of political considerations. He admitted that 'it is impossible where pretensions are nearly equal, wholly to set aside all other considerations'.¹²² Nevertheless, there was a change from Pitt to Liverpool. As we have seen Pitt's approach was markedly political. Liverpool strove to be less so. Let us now consider Perceval's approach.

Before considering how partisan was Perceval's patronage it is worthwhile to recover the context of church patronage in this period. Examining Perceval's involvement in church patronage provides an opportunity to examine the top-down working of ecclesiastical appointments during the Napoleonic Wars. Perceval's freedom of action was curtailed by six restraints. There were two administrative restraints that narrowed the scope of patronage he could exercise – most livings were not in the Crown's gift, and not all Crown livings were solely or traditionally recommended by the prime minister. There were also four types of restraints over how he could then dispense that patronage: mortality, the lack of transfer of existing clergy that created vacancies, the influence of advisers and other interested parties, and monarchical decisions.

¹¹⁹ Taylor, 'Government and the Episcopate', p. 204.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 'Church and State', pp. 68-122.

¹²¹ W. Gibson, 'The Family and the Church in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', (Middlesex Univ. PhD thesis, 1995), pp. 26-48.

¹²² *English Historical Documents 1783-1832*, eds. A. Aspinall and E. Smith (London, 1996), p. 757.

The first administrative restraint was that most positions were determined by lay or clerical patrons rather than the Crown. In 1823 *The Quarterly Review* reported that the clergy (including bishops, cathedrals, and Oxbridge colleges) controlled 3,026 rectories and vicarages; private individuals 6,619 (including clergy such as prebends or incumbents in subdivided parishes), and only 1,048 lay in the gift of the Crown. Furthermore, most ecclesiastical income went into the pockets of lay impropiators.¹²³ This distinction was recognised by Perceval's friends, who distinguished between private and public church patronage. Dudley Ryder, Lord Harrowby, contrasted private patronage, which was for 'friends, relations, or private connections of the patron', and Crown and episcopal patronage which 'formed the chief fund for that incitement [to diligence] and for those rewards [of merit]. It was so certainly in theory, and to a considerable degree in practice'.¹²⁴ There was concern that nepotistic or venal lay patrons might choose inadequate clergymen. However, Perceval proved a traditionalist, being reluctant to interfere with lay rights. In 1804 he helped the Gunning family in asserting their right to present the living of Piddington in Northamptonshire.¹²⁵ Nor did he concur with Redesdale's plan to tax lay patrons to bolster small livings.¹²⁶

The second administrative restraint was that Perceval lacked unfettered authority over the Crown livings. As Payne has detailed for North's and Pitt's ministries, there was a

¹²³ [E. Edwards], 'Ecclesiastical Revenues', *QR*, 29 (1823), pp. 555-6; G. Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 47.

¹²⁴ Earl of Harrowby, *Substance of the Speech of the Earl of Harrowby delivered in the House of Lords, Monday, June 18, 1810, upon a Clause in the Appropriation Act for Granting the Sum of One Hundred Thousand Pounds for the Relief of the Poorer Clergy* (London, 1811), p. 6.

¹²⁵ Northamptonshire Archives, G(H) 755-9: Perceval to George Gunning, 20 Aug. 1804, 21 Aug. 1804; Perceval to Sir Robert Gunning, 21 Aug. 1804, 1 Oct. 1804, 4 Dec. 1804.

¹²⁶ Harrowby MSS, Vol XII fo. 115: Redesdale to Harrowby, 5 June 1808.

fourfold division over responsibility for them.¹²⁷ Perceval's correspondence demonstrates that these distinctions persisted. First, in England and Wales livings under £20 a year were controlled by the Lord Chancellor.¹²⁸ There was a King's book that ministers consulted to determine rights to present the living. Thus in February 1811, when Lord Kensington wished to help the Revd James Summers secure the living of Tenby in Pembrokeshire, Perceval could only respond that he had already sent Lord Eldon two other applications, commending one of them.¹²⁹ Evidently this distinction was not always respected. In 1810 Perceval encroached on Eldon's patronage, securing the living of Kirkby Moorside for the Revd Joseph Coltman (also rector of Beverley), despite its being in the Lord Chancellor's gift.¹³⁰ Secondly, livings in Ireland were jointly overseen by the Lord Lieutenant, the Home Secretary, and the Prime Minister. The Duke of Richmond asked Richard Ryder to secure royal authorisation of various senior clerical appointments.¹³¹ This followed epistolary exchanges between Perceval and Richmond. Additionally, the Home Secretary received episcopal returns showing the number of livings in each diocese worth under £150 per annum.¹³² Royal authorisation, including for English bishoprics, formally came through the Home Secretary.¹³³ Thirdly, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster controlled various livings, mainly in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Consequently, Perceval exercised limited patronage during the Portland ministry, which he retained throughout his premiership. Fourthly, all English and Welsh deaneries and bishoprics; six University professorships; the

¹²⁷ For a useful breakdown of Crown patronage see: Payne 'Church Patronage Networks', pp. xi-xviii.

¹²⁸ BL, Add MS 89036/1/14, fo. 23: Bishop of Lincoln to Pitt, 6 Feb. 1805.

¹²⁹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, F.7: Lord Kensington to Perceval, 6 Feb. 1811; draft reply on back dated 7 Feb. 1811.

¹³⁰ *LCGIII*, v, pp. 589-90; Holland (Perceval) Papers Bound Volume fo. 11: Eldon to Perceval, nd.

¹³¹ TNA, HO 100/157, fo. 114: Richmond to Ryder, 23 Mar. 1810; fo. 146: idem, 7 May 1810.

¹³² *Ibid.*, fo. 25: Wellesley Pole to John Beckett, 27 Jan. 1810.

¹³³ *LCGIII*, iv, p. 285.

Mastership of Trinity College, Cambridge; prebendal stalls at Canterbury, Worcester and Westminster Abbey; and canonries at Christ Church (Oxford) and St George's Chapel (Windsor) were Crown appointments where the prime minister advised. In 1807-9 the otherwise ineffectual Duke of Portland retained control of church patronage, Perceval retrospectively stating that 'I was very rarely consulted by the Duke of Portland upon such subjects'.¹³⁴ Portland's promises of future patronage also fettered Perceval during his premiership. In August 1810 Queen Charlotte was informed that Perceval was unable to assist Mr Digby's application to become Prebend of Worcester, because he first had to provide 'for several applications some of which are even founded upon promises which Mr Perceval himself had procured for them from His Grace the Duke of Portland'.¹³⁵ In August 1811 Perceval recommended the Revd Richard Stopford partially because of Portland's earlier promise, though acknowledging himself not 'absolutely bound' by it.¹³⁶ There was also the tradition that appointments to English bishoprics alternated between Oxford and Cambridge alumni; this was not unbreakable, but was generally adhered to. Hence Portland explained to Perceval that appointing Portland's sons' tutor Samuel Goodenough would 'restore the Order of Promotion to The Bench to its usual alternate Course'.¹³⁷

Having considered the administrative restraints on Perceval's exercise of patronage, let us illuminate the constraints on his recommendations. First, ecclesiastical patronage often depended on the vagaries of mortality. Death directly created vacancies. Second, clerics moved up the ecclesiastical hierarchy or to wealthier posts, relinquishing lesser positions which needed filling. The Duke of Wellington as prime minister appointed an Archbishop of

¹³⁴ NLI, MS 63 fo. 889: Perceval to Marquis of Ely, 11 Jan. 1810.

¹³⁵ CUL, Add MS 8713/XIV/A10: Perceval to Queen Charlotte, c. Aug. 1810; *LCGIII*, v, p. 638.

¹³⁶ *CPW*, viii, p. 124.

¹³⁷ Holland (Perceval) Papers B.15: Portland to Perceval, 10 Dec. 1807.

Canterbury, seven bishops, five deans, twelve canons and prebends.¹³⁸ Contrastingly, few clerics died or moved whilst Perceval controlled patronage. There had been a flurry of appointments under the Talents and under Portland, altering fourteen English bishoprics. The Grim Reaper was evidently lacklustre during Perceval's period as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, when he controlled the duchy's clerical patronage: he explained to Charles Abbot in October 1807 'that there has not yet occurred a single vacancy under the Duchy since I have had my office'.¹³⁹ He informed Richard Ryder in November 1808 that 'he had not the vacancies of six weeks to dispose of out of a year and a half'.¹⁴⁰ Once Perceval ascended to the premiership the same good fortune among clerics continued, something he remarked about to Abbot:

That opportunities do not very often occur you may have some notion of when I tell you the last Stall which was given away by the Crown at my nomination was your former Chaplain there was vacant at the same time the Deanery of Exeter which was appointed to in a few days after, and since that The Cathedrals or Rather their Chapters, nay I may say both, have been remarkably healthy.¹⁴¹

Third, Perceval's involvement is hard to examine because patronage was not about one person taking all the decisions. Networks and advisers were significant. Advice could come from interested parties or from close friends. Laymen recommended candidates to the prime minister: for example a Mr Cooper, candidate for the rectory of Waddingham in Lincolnshire, had six supporters that Portland named to George III.¹⁴² Laymen could be

¹³⁸ Jupp, *Eve of Reform*, p. 48.

¹³⁹ TNA, PRO 30/9/15, Box 2: Perceval to Abbot, 7 Oct. 1807.

¹⁴⁰ Harrowby MSS Vol. IV, fo. 165: Richard Ryder to Henry Ryder, 28 Nov. 1808

¹⁴¹ TNA, PRO 30/9/15, Box 2, Perceval to Abbot, 5 Aug. 1811.

¹⁴² *LCGIII*, v, p. 39.

advisers. In Perceval's case Harrowby possibly filled this role, reportedly tormenting the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of St Asaph with daily queries on patronage.¹⁴³ However, correspondence between Harrowby and Perceval on church patronage has not survived. Clergymen were also potentially important advisers. The Duke of Portland checked with the Archbishop of Canterbury before recommending candidates in 1807 and 1809.¹⁴⁴ George Pretyman had advised Pitt; but he became estranged from the Pittites and closer to Lord Grenville. Most significant was Perceval's relationship with William Lort Mansel. He consulted with Mansel over a candidate for a chaplaincy in Ceylon.¹⁴⁵ An applicant through Mansel for patronage reckoned that the bishop's intervention would 'make 'all Competition cease'', a view Mansel naturally disclaimed.¹⁴⁶ Mansel had benefited from Perceval's patronage. In 1804 he had been considered for a bishopric.¹⁴⁷ When Archbishop Moore died in 1805 Perceval lobbied Pitt, urging Mansel as a candidate for one of the positions which Moore had formerly held.¹⁴⁸ During Portland's ministry Perceval overrode George III's opposition to Mansel becoming Bishop of Bristol, reputedly threatening otherwise to resign.¹⁴⁹ But the monarch's view of Mansel had softened by October 1810, allowing Perceval to honour a three-year old promise by giving Mansel the living of Barwick in Elmet in Yorkshire.¹⁵⁰ This constituted pluralism, excused by the poverty of the Bristol See. Furthermore, Perceval urged the appointment of a resident curate, a call diligently heeded by

¹⁴³ *HMC Fortescue*, x, p. 51.

¹⁴⁴ *LCGIII*, iv, pp. 656-7; Bodleian, MSS Top Oxon b. 170, fo. 32: Archbishop of Canterbury to the Bishop of London, 14 May 1809.

¹⁴⁵ BL Add MS 49185, fo. 99: Perceval to Mansel, fragment nd.

¹⁴⁶ Holland (Perceval) Papers Bound Volume fo. 62: Mansel to Perceval, 27 Oct. 1811.

¹⁴⁷ *Colchester*, i, p. 474.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, PRON 30/8/166, fo. 83: Perceval to Pitt, 21 Jan. 1805.

¹⁴⁹ *LCGIII*, v, pp. 86-8; *Letters of Sydney Smith*, ii, 653-4.

¹⁵⁰ BL, Add MS 49185, fo. 9: Perceval to Mansel 28 May 1807; fo. 77: idem, 13 Oct. 1810; *LCGIII*, v, pp. 638-9.

Mansel.¹⁵¹ This patronage echoed the eighteenth century habit of rewarding prime ministers' teachers and tutors. Despite Perceval's connection with Mansel, unlike Grenville, Perceval did not maintain correspondence with a wide network of bishops. The Bishop of Peterborough lavishly praised his actions during the Regency Crisis.¹⁵² However, more than most Hanoverian prime ministers Perceval's church patronage was apparently determined by laymen, chiefly himself and those who corresponded with him.

The fourth direct administrative restraint on Perceval was the monarch. The King, and later the Prince Regent, made the final decision on appointments. They overruled the premier over the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1805 and the bishopric of Oxford in 1812. Admittedly George III's own view on church patronage chimed with Perceval's, having declared in 1797 that 'I think the nomination of Bishops and Judges a trust in the crown that ought to be administer[ed] with the greatest attention to the advancement of the former in religion and in the latter of the due administration of justice.'¹⁵³ Intellectual ability, character, orthodox piety, and soundness in church politics impressed him.¹⁵⁴ Contrastingly the Prince Regent insisted on the Oxford see for William Jackson, brother of his former tutor, despite (even perhaps because of) his reputation as a '*bon vivant*', which disqualified him in Perceval's eyes.¹⁵⁵

Let us now turn to how Perceval did exercise church patronage. Given Perceval's reputation as the 'Evangelical Prime Minister' we might expect his dispensation of patronage to highlight that allegiance. Certain appointments do suggest that. The Revd John Owen was an

¹⁵¹ CUL, Add MS 9450/C10/226-30, 241: Mansel to John Hailstone, 14 Oct. 1810, 20 Oct. 1810, nd, 23 Dec. 1810, 31 Dec 1810.

¹⁵² Holland (Perceval) Papers XXVI.74: Bishop of Peterborough to Perceval, 10 Feb. 1811.

¹⁵³ Duffy, *Younger Pitt*, p. 41.

¹⁵⁴ *The Correspondence of George III*, ed. J. Fortescue (6 vols., London, 1927-8), v, pp. 252, 254; J. Black, *George III: America's Last King* (London, 2006), p. 190.

¹⁵⁵ CPW, viii, pp. 8-9, 276-7.

energetic evangelical appointed as Chaplain-General of the Army. Owen's father had been a friend of Wesley. Similar support was given to Henry Ryder, brother of Perceval's cabinet colleagues. In 1808 Perceval had successfully lobbied Portland for Ryder to become a Canon of Windsor.¹⁵⁶ The Deanery of Wells followed; and shortly before his death he recommended Ryder for a bishopric, which was subsequently fulfilled by Liverpool.¹⁵⁷

However, Perceval also supported the careers of numerous high-Church, or known anti-evangelical clergymen. Mansel may have influenced him, being an anti-Calvinist.¹⁵⁸ His appointment as Master of Trinity College, Cambridge had met with Wilberforce's disapproval. Probably Wilberforce wanted Isaac Milner appointed instead.¹⁵⁹ We have already mentioned that Christopher Wordsworth thought it worthwhile to seek Perceval's and Mansel's support. Furthermore, Perceval patronised the later Prince-Bishop of Durham William Van Mildert, approving of Van Mildert's efforts to become preacher of Lincoln's Inn. He promised, if Van Mildert were unsuccessful, to 'show himself my friend in some other way'. The victorious cleric was promptly treated to dinner with the 'Prime Minister, who is a delightful man'.¹⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly Van Mildert offered an admiring eulogy of Perceval.¹⁶¹ Similarly Perceval went to considerable lengths to secure William Howley as Oxford Regius Professor of Divinity in 1809, overcoming Howley's doubts through the persuasion of Cyril Jackson.¹⁶² Perceval later mentioned Howley as a potential candidate for the Oxford see, alongside Edward Legge.¹⁶³ Both men were subsequently raised to the bench

¹⁵⁶ Harrowby MSS, Vol. IV fo. 126: Richard to Dudley Ryder, 14 Feb. 1808.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. V fo. 108-9: Henry to Dudley Ryder, 22 May 1812.

¹⁵⁸ W. Mansel, *A Sermon Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts...on...February 19, 1813* (London, 1813), pp. 10-11.

¹⁵⁹ Payne, 'Church Patronage Networks', pp. 298-9.

¹⁶⁰ P. Adams, *A History of the Douglas Family of Morton in Nithsdale (Dumfriesshire) and Fingland (Kirkcudbrightshire) & their Descendants* (Bedford, 1921), pp. 453-6.

¹⁶¹ Van Mildert, *Assassination of the Right Hon. Spencer Perceval*.

¹⁶² LPL, MS 28184, fo. 38: Perceval to Howley, 11 Oct. 1809; MS 2186, fo. 4-8: Cyril Jackson to Howley, 24, 26 and 28 Oct. 1809.

¹⁶³ CUL, MS Add. 8713/XIII/59: Perceval to Prince Regent (Draft), 17 Dec. 1811.

by Liverpool, Howley later becoming Primate. Another high-Churchman patronised by Perceval was the Revd Edward Pearson, from 1808 Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. This connection has been entirely neglected in existing literature, Gray for example never mentioning him. This patronage is surprising for an ‘Evangelical Prime Minister’, given Pearson’s polemics against the prominent evangelicals Charles Simeon and John Overton.¹⁶⁴ Pearson’s ‘temperate view’ of prophecy secured Perceval’s support in 1807 for him to give the Warburton Lectures, which concentrated on that subject.¹⁶⁵ Previously Perceval had supported Pearson’s idea of a professor of ritual divinity at Cambridge.¹⁶⁶ Pearson in turn published a public letter to Perceval on the established Church, including an anonymised tribute to Perceval’s support.¹⁶⁷ Hitherto unused sources in the University of Pennsylvania show that Pearson was invited to dine with Perceval,¹⁶⁸ and Pearson’s demise in 1811 may alone have prevented his promotion to the Bench.¹⁶⁹ Curiously (and probably fatally for their survival) Jane Perceval subsequently asked for the return of her husband’s letters to Pearson.¹⁷⁰

In an Irish context Perceval’s support of the academics William Hales and William Magee also indicates his willingness to promote high-Churchmen. His support reaffirms the importance which Perceval attached to theological ideas in singling out potential candidates. Hales had in 1808 published *Dissertations on Prophecy, expressing the Divine and Human*

¹⁶⁴ E. Pearson, *Remarks on the Doctrines of Justification by Faith: in a Letter to the Rev. John Overton* (London, 1802); *ibid.*, *Cautions to the Hearers and Readers of ... Mr Simeon’s Sermon, entitled ‘Evangelical & pharisaical righteousness compared’* (London, 1810).

¹⁶⁵ Holland (Perceval) Papers XXI.1: Lord Mansfield to Perceval, 2 Oct 1807.

¹⁶⁶ W. Hunt, *A Brief Memoir of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence, of the Rev. Edward Pearson* (London, 1845), pp. 95, 120.

¹⁶⁷ E. Pearson, *Remarks on the Dangers Which Threaten the Established Religion, and on the Means of Averting Them: in a Letter to the Rt. Hon. Spencer Perceval, M.P. Chancellor of the Exchequer* (London, 1807), p. 77.

¹⁶⁸ Kislak Center, University of Pennsylvania, MS Coll 442: Perceval to Pearson, 3 Oct [1807].

¹⁶⁹ Hunt, *Rev. Edward Pearson*, p. 145.

¹⁷⁰ Harrowby MSS Vol. V, fo. 114: Henry to Dudley Ryder, 12 Aug. 1812.

Character of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁷¹ Perceval therefore approved of Richmond's wish in September 1810 to grant him a bishopric.¹⁷² Supporting Magee is perhaps more surprising, given the high-Church Irishman's liberal views. Reputedly Perceval admired Magee's work on atonement and called him 'the ablest divine in the Protestant Church'.¹⁷³ Magee's biographer exaggerated in claiming that Perceval preferred Magee as Bishop of Oxford.¹⁷⁴ But Magee did cite Perceval's support whilst unsuccessfully contending for Irish preferment to Liverpool's ministry.¹⁷⁵ Two motives probably conjoined to explain this unexpected support. One was commendation for Magee's works. The other probably echoed William Stuart's view that whilst at Trinity College Dublin Magee 'does much harm', politically he 'could do little' harm as a bishop.¹⁷⁶ Magee's eventual elevation to the archbishopric of Dublin did enable him to advocate the 'Second Reformation' in Ireland, a cause which Perceval championed. These examples suggest that Perceval did not disproportionately favour evangelicals for preferment. Rather his sympathies lay with those of respectable character, sharing his interest in prophecy, or (normally) espousing anti-Catholic views.

Having established Perceval's lack of partisanship towards ecclesiastical groups, let us consider how politically partisan he was. There are strong reasons to think Perceval

¹⁷¹ H. Overton, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1894), p. 182.

¹⁷² NLI, MS 63, fo. 890: Perceval to Richmond, 8 Sep. 1810; MS 61, fo. 360: Richmond to Perceval 16 Sep. 1810.

¹⁷³ A. Kenney, 'Memoir of Archbishop Magee', *The Works of the Most Reverend William Magee, Lord Archbishop of Dublin* (2 vols., London, 1842), i, p. xxxvi; J. Watkins, F. Shoberl, W. Uppcott (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1816), p. 217.

¹⁷⁴ Perceval's draft letter to the Prince Regent outlines how George III agreed that the Dean of Windsor Edward Legge should receive a bishopric that would cause a translation to Oxford. Alternatively, he proposed Cyril Jackson and William Howley, commending their characters. The Prince Regent proposed William Jackson instead. CUL, Add MS8713/XIII/59: Perceval to Prince Regent, 17 Dec. 1811 (draft).

¹⁷⁵ R. Shipkey, 'Problems of Irish Patronage during the Chief Secretaryship of Robert Peel, 1812-18', *HJ*, 10 (1967), p. 49.

¹⁷⁶ K. Milne, 'Principle or pragmatism: Archbishop Brodrick and church education policy' in A. Ford, J. McGuire, K. Milne (eds.), *As by Law Established: The Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), p. 189.

presaged Liverpool's more meritocratic, less politicised, approach. Rhetorically Perceval valued merit among clergymen. This echoed Addington and Portland. Addington had agreed with Wilberforce 'that great Good would arise if respectable, & diligent Parish Priests were brought forward into high Situations in the Church', though they differed over candidates for the deanery of York.¹⁷⁷ Portland lamented 'the loss which The Episcopal Bench has sustained in point of Literary Reputation' through deaths in 1807.¹⁷⁸ Perceval reiterated these ideas, hinting that his attitude reflected wider changes among senior Pittites. The Bishop of Clonfert was informed by Lord Arden that 'preeminence [*sic*] of Clerical Merit & Character is the only Title to which M^r Perceval looks' when recommending bishops.¹⁷⁹ Perceval normally stressed that candidates were of 'extremely respectable character' or 'a very respectable and worthy Clergyman'.¹⁸⁰ This appreciation of merit combined with an interest in the minutiae of clerical appointments, indicating how Perceval appreciated the importance of church patronage and was desirous of bolstering the established Church through its judicious application. For example, we find him recommending the Revd Robert Miller, of respectable character, to become chaplain of the British Factory at Lisbon.¹⁸¹

In practice Perceval's idea of merit meant an interest in prophecy, hostility to Catholic claims, and a reputation for good character. Perceval was also sensitive to being overly political in his recommendations. That Perceval was 'uniformly divided from him [Dr Laurence's brother] in politics' was no bar to his appointment as Oxford's Regius Professor of Hebrew, for 'I feel the appointments to Professorial Chairs, to impose upon me a very serious & important duty of selecting for the best and therefore you may let Dr L – that he

¹⁷⁷ Bodleian, MS Wilberforce d. 13, fo. 9: Addington to Wilberforce, 24 Sep. 1801.

¹⁷⁸ Holland (Perceval) Papers B.15: Portland to Perceval, 10 Dec. 1807.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, D.10: Bishop of Clonfert to Arden, 24 Mar. 1810.

¹⁸⁰ CUL, Add MS 8713/XIII/36: Perceval to Prince Regent, 22 Apr. 1811.

¹⁸¹ CPW, viii, pp. 77, 124.

will in no degree be indebted to me for his appointment but solely to himself'.¹⁸² Perceval's recommendation of Richard Laurence was posthumously honoured by Liverpool.¹⁸³

Perceval's initial clerical appointments in 1809 were criticised by the Foxite *Morning Chronicle* as overtly political. The appointments were the Duke of Rutland's former tutor (Bowyer Sparke) becoming bishop of Chester, Gerald Wellesley becoming a prebend of St Paul's, and a relation of Portland's, a Mr Jones, becoming a prebend of Westminster.¹⁸⁴ These followed Portland's recommendations.¹⁸⁵ Later in October 1809, however, Perceval refused to recommend the Duke of Cumberland's tutor, William Cookson, as dean of Canterbury, because though 'a very respectable and deserving man' this appointment 'would have been ascribed, tho' not to improper yet certainly to less worthy motives'.¹⁸⁶

Perceval's recommendations give further evidence of his concept of merit. We have detailed his support of high-Church clergymen interested in prophecy and hostile to Catholics. Amongst those not easily categorised as high-Church or evangelical a similar theme is seen. Perceval's preferred candidate to be dean of Canterbury, Dr Gerard Andrewes, fits this description. Eldon commended the recommendation as doing 'you great Credit' and 'the Cause of Religion & the Church infinite Service',¹⁸⁷ an approbation echoed by Grenville's friend, Bishop Moss of Oxford.¹⁸⁸ Lord Melbourne recorded of Andrewes' preaching: 'Both his manner and language very plain, forcible, and impressive, his doctrines rather strong and dogmatical.'¹⁸⁹ Andrewes' apparent millennial beliefs, probably explains Perceval's support.¹⁹⁰ Clergymen also appealed to Perceval's anti-Catholic predilections. To

¹⁸² Yale, OSB MSS File 11715: Perceval to Lord Stowell, 11 Mar. 1812.

¹⁸³ DRO, 152/M/C/1809/OZ: Charles Abbot to Sidmouth, 12 Sep. 1813.

¹⁸⁴ *Morning Chronicle* (9 Oct. 1809), p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Duke University, Wilberforce Papers: Perceval to Wilberforce, 23 Jan. 1810.

¹⁸⁶ *LCGIII*, v, p. 155; BL, Add MS 82611, fo. 78: Perceval to Eldon, 14 Oct. 1809.

¹⁸⁷ Holland (Perceval) Papers V.6: Eldon to Perceval, 8 Oct. 1809.

¹⁸⁸ BL, Add MS 59002, fo. 148: Moss to Grenville, 17 Oct. 1809.

¹⁸⁹ *Lord Melbourne's Papers*, ed. L. Sanders 2nd edn (London, 1890), p. 46.

¹⁹⁰ *Diary of Farington*, xiv, p. 4948.

buttress his case for the deanery of Lincoln, Isaac Milner highlighted his 1808 sermons ‘on the Inestimable blessing of Protestantism, and the danger of Catholic Emancipation’.¹⁹¹

Perceval did balance notions of good character and merit with gratifying the wishes of interested parties, following Lord Uxbridge’s advice in recommending a Revd Lloyd to the living of Aberffaw on Anglesey. But, revealingly, Perceval’s grounds for support were not primarily Lloyd’s patron, but that ‘he is a very respectable clergyman and what is no inconsiderable qualification for a living in Angelsea [*sic*], that he understands the Welsh language’.¹⁹²

Irish church patronage similarly shows Perceval’s meritocratic approach. Irish ecclesiastical patronage had been mired in the familial interests of the Protestant Ascendancy and then satisfying the ‘Union Engagements’, promises of preferment made in return for supporting the Union. The Archbishop of Armagh, William Stuart, had threatened to resign over the appointment of the immoral George de la Poer Beresford as Bishop of Kilmore in 1802. Redesdale’s opinion was that while such men might be kept in deaneries, ‘such a man on the Bench may ruin Ireland, or at least defeat the good effects of the exertions of the rest of the Bench’.¹⁹³ However, by 1809 the commitments were largely complete, and a different attitude developed, as already seen in Perceval’s championing of Hales and Magee. Another notable case was Perceval’s letter to Lord Ely in January 1810. Ely claimed that Portland and Perceval had in summer 1809 approved of his wish to translate his brother, Lord Robert Tottenham, from the bishopric of Killaloe to Elphin. Ely’s claim was based on returning pro-government MPs. However, the Duke of Richmond had determined to show ‘total neglect of parliamentary Influence in his Ecclesiastical arrangement’.¹⁹⁴ Richmond and Liverpool had

¹⁹¹ Holland (Perceval) Paper E.1: Milner to Perceval, 1 Jan. 1810.

¹⁹² *LCGIII*, v, p. 546.

¹⁹³ E. Brynn, ‘William Stuart, Archbishop of Armagh (1755-1822),’ *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 49 (1980) pp. 343-7.

¹⁹⁴ Holland (Perceval) Papers E.2: Lord Ely to Perceval, 7 Jan. 1810.

agreed on this plan, and it was one which Perceval and Richard Ryder concurred with ‘at all times and under any circumstances, but most especially at the present time considering the state of the protestant church in Ireland’. This indicates how Perceval was not alone in this meritocratic impulse, instead being the leader of a coterie of Pittites committed to strengthening the Anglo-Irish established Churches. Consequently, Tottenham was offered the unwanted bishopric of Waterford. Perceval’s rejection of Ely’s request was partly based on supporting Richmond. He zealously added:

yet independent of that consideration, I must say for myself, that anxious as I am to uphold this Government which His Majesty has entrusted to me, and convinced as I am of the necessity of doing so by all proper means in my power, in defence of the just and constitutional independence of the Crown, I would rather be driven from my post tomorrow, than purchase my continuance in it by breaking thro’ so wise and proper as a determination upon such an ultimatum as I understand to be conveyed by your Lordship’s Letter.¹⁹⁵

Perceval’s letter drew praise from Richmond, whose comments to Richard Ryder also indicate how this new approach had been taken to heart: ‘L^d Ely’s Letter is very extraordinary. M^r P has been good enough to send me his ans^r which is a remarkably well written one & taking up the Thing in the handsomest way. It is odd L^d E should have supposed Par’t Interest was to interfere on the Bench.’¹⁹⁶

The American historian Edward Brynn has suggested that Perceval’s good intentions in Ireland ultimately failed, because in 1811-12 the traditional familial influence was

¹⁹⁵ NLI, MS 63 fo. 889: Perceval to Marquis of Ely, 11 Jan. 1810.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., MS 62, fo. 504: Duke of Richmond to Richard Ryder, 14 Jan. 1810. Perceval had sent Richmond his answer to Ely, MS 63, fo. 882: Perceval to Richmond, 11 Jan. 1810.

reasserted.¹⁹⁷ Certain Irish appointments, such as contemplating translating Ely's brother to be Bishop of Clogher,¹⁹⁸ or making Wellesley Pole's relative Dean Leslie the Bishop of Dromore, support this claim.¹⁹⁹ Similarly certain English appointments showed marked political considerations, particularly Perceval's reluctant acquiescence in the Prince Regent's choice of William Jackson as bishop of Oxford. There is a whiff of nepotism about Perceval's permitting Charles Holdsworth to succeed to his brother's vicarage.²⁰⁰ However, other appointments are open to interpretation. Brynn cited Stuart's opposition to appointing Joseph Stock as Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, part of changes to six bishoprics that had resulted from one initial vacancy. These objections were founded on Stock's Catholic sympathies and alleged immorality. But Stock had published a biography of the philosopher and Anglican Bishop Berkeley and works on Isaiah and Job.²⁰¹ Perceval was apparently uneasy at the change because of Stuart's objections, but considered the process too far gone to be halted. Furthermore, Liverpool had represented Stock to be 'a learned Prelate of unexceptionable Character', and Richmond had not conceived of the proposal as political.²⁰² Similarly, in September 1810 Richmond proposed various translations if the Archbishop of Dublin died, which would satisfy both Lord Ely and the powerful Beresford family. The elaborate scheme was nullified by the Archbishop's survival until 1819. But his unsound mind meant that Perceval could insist upon appointing as coadjutor his 'Old Friend', the church reformer Charles Brodrick, Archbishop of Cashel.²⁰³ Alongside these church reform impulses we find

¹⁹⁷ E. Brynn, *The Church of Ireland in the Age of Catholic Emancipation* (London, 1982), p. 73.

¹⁹⁸ NLI, MS 63, fo. 890: Perceval to Richmond, 8 Sep. 1810.

¹⁹⁹ CPW, viii, pp. 9, 229, 234, 243-5.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., vii, p. 339.

²⁰¹ Brynn, *Church of Ireland*, pp. 351-3; J. Kelly, 'Stock, Joseph (1740-1813)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, accessed 31 Jan. 2017 at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26539>.

²⁰² BLRO, WY 995, fo. 15: William Wellesley Pole to Stuart, 10 Apr. 1810.

²⁰³ NLI, MS 61, fo. 360: Richmond to Perceval, 16 Sep. 1810; MS 61, fo. 363, Perceval to Richmond, 22 July 1811; BLRO, WY994, fo. 61: Wellesley Pole to Stuart, 26 July 1811.

Thomas Elrington being promoted to be Provost of Trinity College Dublin, allegedly entirely because of his virulent anti-Catholicism.²⁰⁴ Further evidence that Perceval was not alone in his approach to church patronage came from the risky blocking of two appointments favoured by the Prince Regent. The Regent wanted the Revd Richard Ponsonby made Bishop of Dromore, and the disreputable the Revd Henry Bate Dudley to receive the living of Loughgilly. Ryder obstructed the former, and Wellesley Pole blocked the latter by arguing that the right of presentation lay with the Archbishop of Armagh.²⁰⁵ These events may partially explain why Perceval consented to Jackson's appointment as Bishop of Oxford, the only English see allocated during his premiership. The Regent's restrictions were ending. Marquis Wellesley was attempting to supplant Perceval; and the Regent strongly preferred Jackson. These factors coupled with the earlier obstruction of the Regent's Irish wishes meant that acquiescence was prudent.

Examining Perceval's church patronage policy yields five conclusions. First, there was an admixture of pragmatism and idealism in his patronage. He promoted his tutor and relied upon recommendations which naturally predisposed him towards politically-sympathetic patrons. Secondly, the clergymen he recommended sometimes shared his political leanings on the Catholic question, and often shared his interest in biblical prophecy. Thirdly, he disclaimed and often practised a non-partisan approach that strove to avoid using church patronage for political ends. The emphasis that Perceval placed on character was significant. This aligned with George III's predilections, and consequently, Perceval enjoyed an amiable relationship with the monarch. Fourthly, this aspiration for political non-partisanship overlapped with Perceval's ecclesiastical impartiality. He did not unduly favour 'evangelical'

²⁰⁴ *CPW*, vii, p. 196.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, viii, pp. 9, 229, 234, 243-5.

preferment. Several high-Church clerics enjoyed his support; and several of Liverpool's earliest clerical appointments replicated Perceval's own wishes. Lastly, and above all, it reinforces the idea that Perceval's primary consideration was the health of the established Church. His church patronage demonstrates his paramount Anglicanism.

Conclusion

Perceval's religious beliefs markedly distinguish him from other Pittites. This is partially because they impacted on his policies, infusing his zeal for war against France with notions of a Providential struggle. His interest in biblical prophecy conjoined with ideas about Providence at work in the world was to lend a forthright edge to his approach towards Catholics. These distinctions will be particularly emphasised in the third and fifth chapters. Equally significant is that Perceval's deeds, particularly his church patronage, highlight the overarching importance he placed on of the established Church. This idea of Perceval as the 'Anglican Prime Minister' presaged changes made under Lord Liverpool. It marked a departure from Pitt, whose image of virtue was founded on classical, not Christian, principles. This theme is writ large when we turn to consider Perceval's role in the burgeoning campaign for established Church reform.

Chapter 2: The Anglican Prime Minister

[I]f any minister of this country, since the Reformation, has identified his whole political character with that of the Church of England; if one minister more than any other has stood pledged to the support of that establishment; and if any minister more than another has, by his whole conduct and example, proved himself the sincere and steady friend of that establishment; – you sir, are the man.

Senex, *The State of the Established church; In a Series of Letters to the Rt. Hon. Spencer Perceval* 1st edition (London, 1809), pp. 1-2.

Had the protestant ministry of Mr. Perceval lasted, the church of England would have been finally established in Ireland. A perfect amalgamation of the English and Irish churches would have sprung up under his fostering care.

Revd G. Dwyer, *Tithes in Ireland* (London, 1833), pp. 14-15.

Introduction

As Perceval laboured at Westminster in 1811-12, amid the tranquil repose of Chawton in Hampshire, Jane Austen, a daughter and sister of clergymen, was writing *Mansfield Park*. More than her other works, enlivened as they are by clerics,¹ this novel explicitly touched on a major contemporary political issue: clerical non-residence. The immoral metropolitan Crawfords see no reason for Edmund Bertram to forsake the family home for his parish of Thornton Lacey. Sir Thomas Bertram voices Austen's own preference by responding:

¹ Mr Collins describes with surprising comprehensiveness the duties of a clergyman: J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (2 vols., London, 1844), i, p. 126.

But a parish has wants and claims which can be known only by a clergyman constantly resident, and which no proxy can be capable of satisfying to the same extent ... [Edmund] knows that human nature needs more lessons than a weekly sermon can convey, and that if he does not live among his parishioners and prove himself by constant attention their well-wisher and friend, he does very little either for their good or his own.²

Little has been written about this political issue, despite its overt presence in Austen's novels.³ Austen was not the only literary figure connected with church reform. In 1815, Christopher Wordsworth wrote to Lord Sidmouth discussing the merits of his brother William, Coleridge, or Southey as potential authors of a pamphlet advocating church extension. Filial loyalty did not prevail, as he preferred Southey.⁴

Church reform was an attempt by Pittite ministers to strengthen the established Church, through money and legislation. Perceval was in the vanguard of this struggle and this chapter strengthens this thesis' interpretation of him as the 'Anglican Prime Minister'. Parliamentarians spent more time debating church reform than parliamentary reform during the Napoleonic Wars, and Austen's comments show that the issue resonated beyond Westminster. Perceval thought clerical residence the most important 'question of internal regulation, and national domestic policy'.⁵ Lord Liverpool in 1818 called the New Churches Bill 'the most important measure he had ever submitted to their lordships' consideration'.⁶

² J. Austen, *Mansfield Park*, intro. T. Tanner (1979), p. 255.

³ An interesting exception focused on *Northanger Abbey* is C. Easton, "'The Probability of Some Negligence': Avoiding the Horror of the Absent Clergyman", *Persuasions*, 32 (2010), pp. 154-64.

⁴ *Sidmouth*, iii, pp. 139-40.

⁵ BL, Add MS 49180 fo. 91: draft speech on clerical residence 1802.

⁶ *PD*, 1818, xxxviii, 709.

These statements affirm the importance attached by leading Pittites to the established Church as a keystone of national life. Church reform was a Pittite reform spearheaded by a coterie of Perceval's family and colleagues, in contrast to their resistance to parliamentary reform, Catholic Emancipation, or extensive 'economical reform'. Joining Perceval were his brother-in-law Lord Redesdale and his lifelong friend Dudley Ryder, 1st Earl of Harrowby. Sir John Nicholl, another champion of the established Church, confessed how discussing with Perceval and Harrowby made him 'discover ... how very superficial my own consideration of it [plans for church-building] had been'.⁷

This chapter has two sections. The first highlights the interconnected nature of the English and Irish Church Reform campaigns in the opening dozen years of the nineteenth century. Having placed church reform in its historical, geographic, and historiographical context, it emphasises the connections between the English and Irish campaigns. They had similar aims, a crossover of ideas and examples, involved the same people in both campaigns, and used analogous policies to achieve their goals. Finally, it highlights two significant differences in the church reform campaigns: the differing impact of bishops, and the differing approaches towards schooling. The second section reinforces the argument of the first. It concentrates on reforms to military chaplaincies and schooling. Perceval played a significant role in strengthening Anglican provision to the armed forces, including promoting education with a solid religious underpinning. Focusing on Perceval also illuminates laterally the actions of fellow church reformers. Just as Earl Harrowby was as important to Anglo-Irish church reform as Perceval, so the Revd John Owen and the Duke of York proved vital supporters of these military reforms.

⁷ Harrowby MSS, Vol. XVIII, fo. 316: Sir John Nicholl to Perceval, 7 Sep. 1811.

Anglo-Irish Church Reform

There was considerable crossover between church reform campaigns in England and Ireland. Yet it is largely omitted from the existing, separate historiographies of the established Churches, as acknowledged by Arthur Burns and Stephen Taylor.⁸ Burns observed that when revisionist historians have focused on church reform they normally concentrated on the 1830s onwards.⁹ Revisionism has painted a brighter picture than the one the Victorians emblazoned on historical memory, typified by Lecky's charge against the Church of Ireland that 'The abuses of the Church patronage from the time of the Restoration were probably unparalleled in Europe'.¹⁰ The work of Burns, William Gibson, John Walsh, Stewart Brown and Stephen Taylor among others have duly adjusted our view of the Hanoverian Church of England. Sean Connolly and Nigel Yates have done likewise for Ireland.¹¹ This is partly through judging the established Churches by different standards; in the English case, by rejecting a Victorian yardstick of efficacy and piety to measure Hanoverian effectiveness. In the Irish case avoiding comparison with the English established Church permits a more optimistic assessment of the Church of Ireland's record. Connolly notes that the ruined churches dated from before the Reformation, that reformers and newly-arrived Englishmen are hardly reliable sources, that pluralism and non-residency were invariably products of penury and

⁸ A. Burns 'A Hanoverian legacy? Diocesan Reform in the Church of England c.1800-1830' in J. Walsh, C. Haydon, S. Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 268; S. Taylor, 'Whigs, Bishops and America: The Politics of Church Reform in Mid-Eighteenth Century England', *HJ*, 36 (1993) p. 332. A partial exception is S. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland* (Oxford, 2001) pp. 64-6.

⁹ A. Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England c.1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999), p. 8.

¹⁰ W. Lecky, *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (5 vols., London, 1913), i, p. 204.

¹¹ S. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom, Ireland 1630-1800* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 274-9; N. Yates, *The Religious Condition of Ireland 1770-1850* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 21-2.

logistical difficulties not inattentiveness, and that political patronage was not incompatible with industriousness.¹²

But the Pittite reformers need emphasising. They did see the post-Union established Churches as united. The idea of converting Ireland to Protestantism, the ‘Second Reformation’, has been dated to the 1820s. The historiography has under-estimated the role of politicians compared with clerics.¹³ Yet even in 1833 Peel felt obliged to assert (probably to placate his fellow Conservatives) that ‘He wanted to see the spreading of the Reformation in Ireland’ through ‘the expansive force of the Protestant faith’.¹⁴ Peel’s public words did not match his deeds. But the private declarations of the previous generation of politicians were augmented by action. The Union was seen to have changed the Irish Catholic majority, into a minority within the larger United Kingdom.¹⁵ Likewise in England the legislative and administrative reforms should be seen as foreshadowing the diocesan reforms of the 1820s delineated by Burns.

These debates were not new, nor unique to Britain. There are two contexts for the church reform movement in this period: the geographic context of European church reforms, and the historical context of a renewal of the efforts made in Queen Anne’s reign. Enlightenment Europe saw various attempts at church reform, to improve the efficacy of the clergy and strengthen the control of the state. These tended to be in Catholic Europe – Carlos III in Spain, Pombal in Portugal, Joseph II in the Habsburg Empire, and the Civil Constitution of

¹² S. Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 179, 182-4, 304-6.

¹³ I. Whelan, *The Bible War in Ireland: The ‘Second Reformation’ and the Polarization of Protestant-Catholic Relations, 1800-1840* (Madison, 2005).

¹⁴ *Hansard*, 3rd series, 1833, xvii, 999.

¹⁵ E. Pearson, *Remarks on the Dangers Which Threaten the Established Religion, and on the Means of Averting Them: in a Letter to the Rt. Hon. Spencer Perceval, M.P. Chancellor of the Exchequer* (London, 1807), pp. 30-1.

the Clergy and the Concordat in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France (the most far reaching and radical). Protestant lands presented a contrasting picture: either of widespread religious conformity (such as Lutheran Scandinavia) or an extremely weak ‘established’ church in the United Provinces. The closest Protestant analogy was the subdivision of inflated parishes and the construction and restoration of 174 churches under Gustavus III of Sweden.¹⁶ Only in England were the threats of Deism, the enthusiasm for disestablishment in the age of revolutions (espoused by Priestley, Price, and Paine) and the rise of Protestant nonconformity so potently combined. W.R. Ward has construed Lord Grenville’s proposals for church reform imposed by the state as ‘Josephinist’, a label equally applicable to Perceval’s or Liverpool’s actions.¹⁷ Yet the striking feature of debates over English and Irish church reform was the relative lack of reference to this European context, except alarms over replicating events in France.¹⁸

The second context lies in the efforts, which Protestants dated back to the Reformation, to increase clerical residency, eliminate pluralism, and bolster church attendance. After the Interregnum, plans were drawn up by Archbishops Sheldon and Sancroft, presaging post-1688 reforms.¹⁹ Particularly notable was the construction of new churches, both through necessity after the Great Fire of London, and then following legislation in 1711 to construct fifty new churches in London. This latter effort failed owing to a preoccupation with architectural grandeur that meant only twelve were built. Anticipating measures tried a century later, efforts were made to bolster the lot of poor

¹⁶ N. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, c.1750-1830* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 136.

¹⁷ W. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (London, 1972), p. 52.

¹⁸ Lord Porchester declared of the Stipendiary Curates Bill that ‘He thought the measure founded on the antient jacobin principle’ whilst Mr Alexander claimed: ‘The present bill partook of the character of the revolutionary edicts of the French Jacobins’. *PD*, 1805, v, 152-3.

¹⁹ S. Taylor, ‘Bishop Edmund Gibson’s Proposals for Church Reform’, in S. Taylor, *From Cranmer to Davidson: A Miscellany* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 172-3.

clergy. Queen Anne's Bounty was created, utilising the revenue of the First Fruits and Tenths levied on clergy to increase the value of poor livings. To instil Anglicanism in children the charity school movement grew up, and clerical libraries proliferated to bolster the quality of clergy.²⁰ These endeavours were not universally commended. An ancestor and namesake of Dudley Ryder was a firm opponent of the Anglican charity school movement, whilst Perceval's grandfather may have opposed Queen Anne's Bounty.²¹ With the Hanoverian accession and the ending of Convocation after 1717, the church reform campaign went into abeyance, though Stephen Taylor contends that it simmered on unobtrusively among certain prelates.²²

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, we find the mid-century complacency and solidity of the established Church being shaken initially by the Feathers Tavern petition in 1772, which briefly excited interest in liturgical reform. The quasi-evangelical Beilby Porteus wanted to amend the 17th Article of the 39 Articles, with its reference to predestination, reputedly with the sympathy of George III.²³ Another liturgical reformer, Bishop Richard Watson, a Latitudinarian cleric desirous of abolishing the Athanasian Creed, also instigated a new debate with his calls for equalisation of episcopal income in a public letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, normally seen as the starting gun for what Geoffrey Best termed the 'Third Church Reform Movement'.²⁴

²⁰ J. Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1689-1727* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 170, 175, 239-40; P. Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 2.

²¹ *The Diary of Dudley Ryder 1715-1716*, ed. W. Matthews (London, 1939), p. 165; G. Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 102.

²² Taylor 'Bishop Edmund Gibson's' p. 186; Idem, 'Whigs, Bishops and America', pp. 331-56.

²³ G. Ditchfield, 'The Subscription Issue in British Parliamentary Politics 1771-1779', *Parliamentary History*, 7 (1998), pp. 45-80; Idem, *George III: An Essay in Monarchy* (Basingstoke 2002), p. 85; J. Gascoigne, 'Anglican Latitudinarianism and Political Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century', *History*, 71 (1986), p. 34.

²⁴ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, p. 5.

Similar problems had faced the Church of Ireland from the Reformation onwards, exacerbated by the lack of zeal shown in conversion, and the failure of the Irish Reformation to convert Irish Catholics. The mid-Victorian barrister John Charles Earle embodied Victorian castigation by calling the Hanoverian Church of Ireland ‘a hideous mockery – a fold in many parishes without a flock, and a pastor often without a single sheep’.²⁵ A notable problem was the lack of glebe houses for parish clergy. To ameliorate this the Irish Parliament voted in 1777-8 a grant of £6,000. The grant continued at lower sums (£5,000 from 1785 to 1800) up to and after the Union, enabling 88 new churches and 116 glebe houses to be erected from 1791 to 1803. Irish bishops and archbishops have also been praised for these diocesan reforms, particularly Charles Agar, Charles Brodrick, John Jebb and Lewis O’Beirne.²⁶

In the 1790s there were two approaches to church reform. The first approach was for back-benchers and interested laity to encourage action. Thomas Gisborne opined that ‘Habitual residence on the spot is essential to his being able effectually to perform [his duties]’ and exhorted bishops to prefer their dioceses to Parliament.²⁷ However, as Grayson Ditchfield has shown, most of the legislation carried in the 1790s was small fry – restricting Sabbath working by bakers for example, or tax concessions. The greatest change was the act of 1796 which raised curates’ stipends. But the acts of 1777 and 1781, instigated by Thomas Gilbert, which authorised Queen Anne’s Bounty Board to grant cheap loans to poor livings for building residences remained unused until 1811.²⁸ The second approach was government action manifested in Pitt and Grenville’s ‘Ecclesiastical Plan’ of 1800. Ditchfield has traced

²⁵ J. Earle, *English Premier from Sir Robert Walpole to Sir Robert Peel* (2 vols., London, 1871), ii, p. 104.

²⁶ Yates, *The Religious Condition*, pp. 25, 22, 34, 73-96.

²⁷ T. Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of Men in the Higher and Middle Classes of Society in Great Britain, Resulting from their Respective Stations* (London, 1794), pp. 349, 368.

²⁸ 17 Geo. III, c. 53; 21 Geo. III, c. 66.

its lineaments: augmentation up to £70 per annum of the livings for curates, the repeal of statutes permitting lay prosecution for non-residence, and granting bishops oversight of residency in their dioceses. Inopportune timing, and criticisms from Sir William Scott and Archbishop Moore, followed by Pitt's resignation, saw the plan fail, although it remained a template for future action.²⁹ But non-residency now rose in public consciousness owing to political dissatisfaction with the 1530 Act which had been exploited by informers to prosecute non-resident clergymen including William Van Mildert.³⁰ The abolition of informers' powers to prosecute alongside relaxation of the rules for residency underpinned Sir William Scott's proposed bills of 1801-3 and eventual act of 1803.

Scott's contentious act had a threefold significance. First, Perceval had criticised the legislation in the Commons as ineffective in enforcing residency. This condemnation subsequently gained supporters, the law becoming nicknamed the 'Non-Residence Act'. Secondly, it required annual returns of non-residency from the bishops to the Privy Council, furnishing information on which subsequent actions were based. Thirdly, Scott's residence act was accompanied by a stipendiary curates bill to bolster their income. This was frustrated by procedural difficulties and ultimately stalled in committee, 'on account of some objections made to it by the Heads of Houses at Oxford, & afterwards the great political Dissentions that took place at that time'.³¹ Perceval was to take up the cause of stipendiary curates in 1805.

Alongside the desire for a resident clergyman came a wish to provide a church for him to preach in and for parishioners, especially poorer ones, to worship in. Church-building in England and Ireland proved a significant part of Pittite church reform, both under Perceval

²⁹ G. Ditchfield, 'Ecclesiastical Legislation during the Ministry of the Younger Pitt, 1783-1801', *Parliamentary History*, 19 (2000), p. 71.

³⁰ E. Varley, *The Last of the Prince Bishops: William Van Mildert and the High Church Movement of the early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 34.

³¹ *Woodfall's Parliamentary Register* (London, 1802), 779-80, 792-4.; *PD*, 1803, i, 57, 61, 63-4, 85, 87, 133, 139, 149-50, 157, 332, 354; LPL, MSS 2101, fo. 58: Notebook of Beilby Porteus, entry 2 Dec. 1803.

and Liverpool's ministries. Lamentations had been sounded, by William Wilberforce, by Arthur Young, and by Bishops Porteus and Watson, throughout the 1790s and 1800s, on the dual need for more churches, and more pews for the poor.³² Most prescient for the future was the Bishop of Gloucester, George Huntingford, writing to Wilberforce about Matthew Proctor of Newland. Huntingford noted the problems facing Proctor in building a church to serve the 'scarcely humanized' colliers of the Forest of Dean, adding:

But should not the Legislature give facilities, greater than which now exist, for the building of Churches & Chapels? The Evils arising from paucity of places for Religious Wordship where the Lower Orders can be received and accommodated, are palpable, lamentable, and are working up to National Ruin. No one can rejoice, more than I do, when Parliament votes liberally for adequate objects. But why may not 3 or 400,000 be voted for building Churches, Chapels, & parsonage houses? Why not a Million? The country would not feel it: or if it did feel it, the Bulk of the People would commend such an application of Public Money for visibly essential Public Good.³³

Joanna Innes has shown how church-building fervour did cause an increase in localised Parliamentary acts.³⁴ Private subscriptions could support 'free' churches that ensured seats

³²A. Young, *An Enquiry into the State of the Public Mind amongst the Lower Classes: and on the Means of Turning it to the Welfare of the State. In a Letter to William Wilberforce* (London, 1798), pp. 18-22; R. Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 199.

³³ Bodleian, MS Wilberforce. D.17/1, fo. 54: Huntingford to Wilberforce, 19 Sep. 1809.

³⁴ J. Innes, 'Parliament and Church Reform: Off and On the Agenda', in G. Pentland and M. Davis (eds.), *Liberty, Property and Popular Politics: England and Scotland, 1688-1815. Essays in Honour of H.T. Dickinson* (Edinburgh, 2016), pp. 39-57.

for the poor, one being built in Bath.³⁵ But Proctor's struggling efforts, fettered by lacking the desirable private parliamentary act, reflected the status quo's limitations. It was one similarly confronted by Perceval's brother-in-law, Lord Redesdale, over a proposal to use local rates to pay for a new chapel, alongside repairing an existing church and parsonage, in Stapleton, Gloucestershire. This bill raised the vexatious questions of who should pay, and the relative authority of the bishop and incumbent over nominating the curate. Objections, such as those made to the Stapleton Church Bill, could cause its defeat.³⁶ The shortage of English churches meant that, as Sydney Smith claimed, 'Till this evil is corrected, the Church contends with fearful odds against its opponents',³⁷ partly because many people were unable to access an Anglican place of worship. The problem in Ireland was similarly described, with Redesdale commenting on a shortage of urban churches:

Many parishes are without churches and resident clergymen. Cannot means be found to remedy this evil? Many of the great towns are much increased of late, but there has not been a corresponding increase of churches. Dublin even is in great want of them. The common people have no places in any of the churches. I am persuaded that the establishing some fund for building new churches would be of great benefit, especially if there were accommodations for the lower classes.

Redesdale's concerns echo the complaints made about London and centres of industrialisation in England.³⁸ A major difference was that in Ireland the power to change the

³⁵ T. Bernard, *The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor* (39 vols., London, 1799), ii, p. 203.

³⁶ Bristol Record Office, AC/WH/22, fo. 15-38: papers on the Stapleton Church Bill.

³⁷ S. Smith, *The Works of Sydney Smith* (London, 1869), p. 228.

³⁸ *Sidmouth*, ii, p. 96.

parish structures depended not on a special act of Parliament but on the Lord Lieutenant, which meant that more could be and was done.

This was the background to Perceval's efforts at church reform in 1805-12. These endeavours reinforce the characterisation of Perceval as an Anglican Prime Minister, who championed church reform to depress nonconformity and Catholicism, and bolster the established Church. He acted with a coterie of Pittites, to whom church reform was an important domestic policy. These reforming efforts have been under-stressed in the literature. We should also see the English and Irish church reform campaigns as different sides of the same coin, rather than discrete movements. This contrasts with their separate treatment in the existing historiography; even Stewart Brown, who examined both campaigns in the same book, considered them in different sections.³⁹ This interconnected campaign also contrasts with the failure to assimilate Anglo-Irish laws and finances.⁴⁰ Church reform was one area where politicians were seeking to turn Union hopes into reality. This section therefore recovers and highlights seven important aspects of the church reform campaign. First, a similar motive of diminishing non-Anglicans and expanding the established Church animated action in both countries. Secondly, actions in Ireland were thought to be exemplars for England, and vice-versa. Thirdly, the same people drove forward the campaign on both sides of the Irish Sea, including British politicians and clerics with experience in Ireland, Anglo-Irishmen such as Arthur Wellesley, and Perceval. Fourthly, despite different demographic contexts church reform involved similar policies. This meant legislating to enhance clerical residency, increasing the income of curates, building churches, and promoting residency through

³⁹ Brown, *National Churches*, pp. 62-74.

⁴⁰ J. Innes, 'Legislating for Three Kingdoms: how the Westminster Parliament Legislated for England, Scotland and Ireland, 1707-1830', in J. Hoppit (ed.), *Parliaments, Nations and Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660-1850* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 29-34.

administrative pressure. Fifthly, these policies evolved, with greater deployment of information to the public to make the case. Sixthly, there are hints these were part of a comprehensive plan reminiscent of Pitt's and Grenville's Ecclesiastical Plan. Lastly, the outcomes were not the same. Initially greater progress was made, especially on church and residency construction, in Ireland than in England. These differences can partially be explained through different legal circumstances and the contrasting attitude of bishops. Another revealing difference came in approaches to education, a crucial plank of church reform for ensuring the parishioners of tomorrow.

The first overlap of Anglo-Irish church reform was that they were designed to accomplish similar goals – to buttress the flagging established Church and counteract its opponents, Protestant nonconformists and Roman Catholics respectively. Undeniably, different circumstances existed in the two countries. In England Southey was half-jesting when claiming that Methodists would soon supersede and supplant the established Church.⁴¹ But several commentators, such as 'Senex' and Harrowby in 1810, warned of Dissenters outnumbering Anglicans.⁴² Nonconformist and Methodist advances manifested themselves to contemporaries through parliamentary returns. These showed that in April 1811 there were 2,547 Anglican churches and chapels in parishes exceeding a thousand people, but 3,457 non-Anglican chapels and meeting-houses (not including extensively-used private houses).⁴³ Licences for nonconformist preachers had risen from 80 in 1760-6 to 1318 in 1795-1801 and

⁴¹ [R. Southey], *Letters from England* 2nd edn (3 vols., London, 1808), ii, p. 354.

⁴² Senex, *State of the Established Church* 2nd edn (London, 1810), p. 8; Earl of Harrowby, *Substance of the Speech of the Earl of Harrowby delivered in the House of Lords, Monday, June 18, 1810, upon a Clause in the Appropriation Act for Granting the Sum of One Hundred Thousand Pounds for the Relief of the Poorer Clergy* (London, 1811), p. 19.

⁴³ John Rylands Library (The University of Manchester), MA MS5/1/35: Returns on places of worship, 5 Apr. 1811.

1068 in 1802-8.⁴⁴ English church reform was foursquarely aimed at arresting and reversing this trend, epitomised by Perceval's declaration in 1803:

that there was no provision made for the discharge of the spiritual duty in the absence of the clergyman. In these cases the cure of souls devolved upon dissenters, who did more mischief in three, than the parson could repair in nine months. This was a growing evil which called aloud for a remedy; and this could only be afforded by the continual residence of the clergy.⁴⁵

This declaration testifies that Perceval's goal was not broadly the expansion of Christianity, but specifically of Anglicanism.

Meanwhile the failings of the Church of Ireland were notorious in their own time. The Earl of Shelburne highlighted many of the problems it faced:

He said, that the clergy there, were the best provided for of any in Christendom, in proportion to the ability of the country, and did least for what they received ... for one parish church standing, there were not five in ruins; and whether, upon an average, one fourth of the people were properly attended ... but to come to the root of the grievance, it would be necessary to call in the aid of parliament, to co-operate with the wishes of good and pious men.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ M. Rutz, 'The Politicizing of Evangelical Dissent, 1811-1813', *Parliamentary History*, 20 (2001), p. 190.

⁴⁵ *PR*(2), 1803, iii, p. 105.

⁴⁶ *PH*, xx, 1164.

Other Anglicans, such as Richard Watson and Edmund Burke, acknowledged a problematic paradox in Ireland. Watson confessed in 1787 that ‘as Popery is the religion of a great majority of the state, in strict justice it ought to be the established religion of the country’.⁴⁷ Burke also suggested that he would choose Catholic Emancipation and indeed a Catholic monopoly in Ireland – ‘free, flourishing, happy’ – over the status quo.⁴⁸ The Bishop of Meath was ‘astonished’ to find many Britons sympathetic to a Roman Catholic established Church in Ireland, because they conformed to William Paley’s idea that the established Church should be that of the majority denomination.⁴⁹ Contrastingly the Church of Ireland served 10% of the Irish population, predominantly situated in Ulster and Leinster, falling to only 3–5% in the south and west. Throughout the eighteenth century an aversion to proselytising meant that only c.5,800 people converted to the Church of Ireland.⁵⁰ Post-Union the Church’s problem persisted, as Perceval expressed to Redesdale in 1803:

The abuse you state from the union of livings is very melancholy and the generally neglected state of protestant information in Ireland must very much be lamented (& what makes it more lamentable) more easily lamented than cured. With all my good wishes upon the subject I should have great doubts of the practical benefit of any vigorous attempt at reform ... unless the whole measure was directed by some commanding influence as that which we have seen Mr Pitt asserts I know not how it could prevail against the opposition it would meet.⁵¹

⁴⁷ R. Watson, *Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff* (London, 1817), p. 155.

⁴⁸ *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, eds. P. Marshall and J. Woods (10 vols., Cambridge, 1958-78), viii, p. 118.

⁴⁹ BLRO, WY 994, fo 47: Bishop of Meath to William Stuart, 24 Dec. 1805; W. Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (London, 1785), p. 578.

⁵⁰ Brown, *National Churches*, pp. 16-7, 45.

⁵¹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, Bundle XI, fo. 1: Perceval to Redesdale, 4 Dec. 1802.

However, these doubts were gradually assuaged by a new sense of optimism following the Union, which had united together the two established Churches. This provided a new opportunity, replacing the Catholic majority in Ireland with an Anglican majority across the United Kingdom. The Bishop of Meath was not alone in boldly declaring, in 1808, that ‘there is no longer any such thing in existence as the Church of Ireland, any more than there is a Parliament of England’.⁵² George III saw the Union as furnishing an opportunity for a steady plan of action on ‘that uncivilized island’. This included ensuring clerical residency, particularly of bishops; and maintaining cathedrals and their choirs, which ‘will certainly by degrees draw some of the Roman Catholics to our Church.’⁵³ Royal approval therefore underpinned the chief goal of anti-emancipation politicians post-Union, namely the ‘Protestantising of Ireland’ through the Church of Ireland. Politicians supportive of conversion included Perceval, Redesdale, and Abbot. Conversely Pitt’s Scottish lieutenant Dundas was suspected of favouring a Catholic establishment.⁵⁴ Abbot first articulated this conversion strategy. With one eye on the Peace of Amiens he argued that:

A systematic and comprehensive plan for reforming the abuses of the Protestant Church in Ireland, might then be undertaken, and, if temperately but firmly executed, might gradually enlighten the people, soften their manners, and, by building churches and glebehouses, enforcing residence, and improving and multiplying the parochial and diocesan schools, &c, prevail so far, as to reduce

⁵² PRONI, D207/50/25: Bishop of Meath’s memorandum, Feb. 1808.

⁵³ *LCGIII*, iii, p. 533.

⁵⁴ *An Anglo-Irish Dialogue: A Calendar of the Correspondence between John Foster and Lord Sheffield 1774-1821*, ed. A. Malcomson (Belfast, 1976) p. 37; BLRO WY 994, fo. 47: Bishop of Meath to William Stuart, 24 Dec. 1805.

the weight and strength of the Roman Catholics to a state which would relieve the Government in time to come, from all anxiety for the public safety.

Redesdale endorsed this goal in December 1802.⁵⁵ He was exceedingly optimistic about how the Union could be used to transform Ireland, telling Perceval that ‘I have little doubt that Ireland might be protestantised if due pains were taken for the purpose. Give us good bishops & good Judges, & twenty years will do much’.⁵⁶ Henry Addington (later Lord Sidmouth) assured Redesdale that he agreed: ‘no impression can be more deeply rooted in my mind than that of the importance of rendering Ireland a protestant country’.⁵⁷ Perceval also overcame his earlier pessimism. In 1807, pledging a new stipendiary curates bill, he charged that ‘he wished that the late government [the ‘Talents’] had paid more attention to the church in Ireland’.⁵⁸ Doubtless support for the established Church was partly defensive. Perceval thought it necessary to look to ‘the Church Establishment in Ireland ... for the means of preserving’ the Union. However, he also saw Protestantism expanding (Protestantism being interchangeable with Anglicanism):

I look sanguinely to the effect of an improved state of the Protestant clergy, in point of residence, operating upon the improved state of growing information in Ireland, for the gradual diminution of papal error; I contend that the promotion of the Protestant religion in Ireland has never been pursued upon any rational principle, till of very late years; that it is not even now sufficiently acted upon; that the effect of the experiment fairly tried is not known.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Colchester*, i, pp. 353, 356, 410; PRONI, T3030/2/1: Abbot to Redesdale, 16 Dec. 1802.

⁵⁶ BL, Add MS 49188, fo. 204: Redesdale to Perceval, 23 May 1805.

⁵⁷ PRONI, T3030/3/10: Addington to Redesdale, 7 Jan. 1803.

⁵⁸ *PD*, 1807, ix, 825.

⁵⁹ BL, Add MS 49182, fo. 233, 235: Perceval cabinet memo, c. 1810.

Perceval never used the precise phrase ‘protestantising Ireland’. But his opponents vocally proclaimed that, alongside repression, conversion was his policy solution to Ireland’s woes. Sydney Smith execrated Perceval for that reason:

What is it possible to say to a man as the Gentleman of Hampstead, who really believes it feasible to convert the four million Irish Catholics to the Protestant religion, and considers this as the best remedy for the disturbed state of Ireland? It is not possible to answer such a man with arguments: we must come out against him with beads, and a cowl, and push him into a hermitage.⁶⁰

Similarly in 1808 Sheridan, lacerating the omission of Ireland from the King’s Speech, asked ‘Is their disposition to ameliorate Ireland only to be found in plans for the building [of] glebe houses, the repairing of dilapidated churches, or the increase of protestant charter schools!’⁶¹ This bold policy matched the equally ambitious schemes for converting France to Protestantism hatched at the Peace of Amiens, or of India to Christianity.⁶² Even the radical writer William Cobbett in 1807 (though he later adjusted his views)⁶³ claimed that ‘If he [Perceval] can enforce residence in Ireland ... he will do more towards the tranquillizing of that country than has ever yet been done, or attempted to be done’, a view shared by other radical church reformers.⁶⁴ Whilst it would be an exaggeration to say that government action

⁶⁰ S. Smith, *The Letters of Peter Plymley* (London, 1852), p. 80.

⁶¹ *PD*, 1808, x, 81.

⁶² N. Murray, ‘The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals, 1789-1802’, (Oxford Univ. DPhil thesis, 1975), pp. 279-80.

⁶³ In 1811 he endorsed the abolition of tithes and disestablishment, J. Cobbett and J. Cobbett, *Selections from Cobbett’s Political Works* (4 vols., London, 1835), iii, pp. 488-9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* ii, p. 160; Senex, *Established Church* 1st edn, p. 27.

in Ireland was limited solely to conversion resulting from church reform, these efforts formed an important plank of their policy.

Secondly, Ireland was thought to furnish examples for England. Harrowby acknowledged that the aversion to consolidating livings derived ‘from the enormous abuse of this practice in Ireland’. He recommended Irish legislation as a model for how to encourage the construction or repair of parsonage-houses in England.⁶⁵ When opposing the Foxite proposal to revalue Irish livings the Protestant firebrand Dr Patrick Duigenan declared that ‘The churches of Ireland and of England were declared to be one and indivisible, and therefore why put the clergy of Ireland upon a different footing from those in England?’⁶⁶ Perceval asked Arthur Wellesley in 1807 for information on erecting glebe-houses and churches, as he wished to do likewise in England ‘and should be glad to see how it is managed in Ireland’.⁶⁷ There was often also a desire to extend English church measures to Ireland. In 1805 Perceval’s introduction of the Stipendiary Curates Bill was immediately met by Sir John Newport’s request that it be extended to Ireland. Perceval concurred with its applicability to Ireland and noted that Duigenan (who, alongside John Foster, were the two chief ‘Irish’ Pittite politicians propounding Irish church reform) had a plan in the pipeline.⁶⁸ A similar Irish bill was planned by Foster when Perceval unsuccessfully reintroduced his bill in 1808; Perceval later extended his bill to Ireland.⁶⁹ Duigenan claimed that he modelled his proposed residency bill for Ireland on Sir William Scott’s English act;⁷⁰ while Arthur Wellesley and Perceval discussed whether Scott’s act could be improved upon in an Irish context.⁷¹ The eventual legislation was modelled on Scott’s contentious legislation, partly

⁶⁵ Earl of Harrowby, *Speech of the Earl of Harrowby*, pp. 10, 28.

⁶⁶ *PD*, 1808, xi, 280.

⁶⁷ *Wellington*, v, p. 174.

⁶⁸ *PD*, 1805, iv, 510-1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 1808, xi, 54, 841.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 1807, ix, 827.

⁷¹ *Wellington*, v, pp. 150, 166.

because, as Wellesley explained against the objections of Perceval, of the Irish wish ‘to put the Church in both countries precisely on the same footing’.⁷² In 1812 the Archbishop of Cashel, Charles Brodrick, noted a willingness to extend both Rose’s controversial Parish Register Bill and Perceval’s planned new curates bill from England to include Ireland.⁷³

The third overlap was that the same people were involved in both campaigns. Politicians such as Redesdale and Abbot – who went to Ireland post-Union as Lord Chancellor and Chief Secretary respectively – are the most obvious bridge. Arthur Wellesley’s correspondence shows that Perceval took a strong interest in the Irish as well as the English reforms. We also find British clerics as bishops in Ireland, including the Scottish Archbishop of Armagh William Stuart, and Euseby Cleaver, Bishop of Ossory and brother of the Bishop of St Asaph. Cleaver wrote to Redesdale confidently commenting on English church reform:

The Church of England wants much regulation as far as respects an increase of places of worship, in our Metropolis, in our northern counties, and our trading persons from the want of them in the latter, where perhaps the population in fifty years has increased threefold, the majority are brought up in principles hostile to our Church & Constitution, and are ready to apply their influence & wealth, acquired under this Constitution, to distress and to subvert it ... We have a law here [in Ireland] well calculated to meet the evil of extended parishes. It enables the rector, with the consent of the bishop, to set apart a district and to endow it with a competent portion of tithes. The trustees of the First Fruits give aid for

⁷² Ibid, p. 334.

⁷³ BLRO, WY 994, fo. 64: Brodrick to Stuart, 22 Apr. 1812.

building the church, and the district becomes a separate parish to all intents and purposes.⁷⁴

Wellesley's involvement highlights the role of Anglo-Irish men in Irish church reform. His brother and indirect successor as Chief Secretary, William Wellesley Pole, was apparently less engaged, in contrast to his intimate involvement in suppressing Catholic agitation, and steering Irish education legislation through Parliament.⁷⁵ Similarly uninvolved was the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Richmond, who instead concentrated on church patronage. The main Pittite church reform advocates in Ireland were John Foster, Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Patrick Duigenan. However, they worked in conjunction with English-based ministers, with Foster regularly corresponding with Perceval.

The most obvious difference between the two campaigns was the context in which they occurred. In Ireland there was an entrenched Catholic majority, whereas in England the rise of nonconformists, among the Methodists, was comparatively recent. Yet while permanently the numerical majority, Catholics were only now undergoing a political resurgence, manifested in the Catholic Emancipation campaign, and in stone and mortar. Brodrick worried that there was a 'spirit of rivalry ... [in] the splendid new [Catholic] edifices springing up in every quarter of the kingdom for places of public worship far surpassing any new buildings which the established church can boast of'.⁷⁶ But the measures pursued to help the established Churches counteract and counterattack these threats were strikingly similar. This constitutes the fourth element of the overlapping campaigns. Action proceeded through legislation, parliamentary grants, administrative action, and voluntary deeds. Their goals were

⁷⁴ PRONI, T3030/10/19: Euseby Cleaver to Redesdale, 7 Oct. 1806.

⁷⁵ *PD*, 1811, xx, 149-50.

⁷⁶ T. Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690-1830* (Dublin, 1992), pp. 274-5.

to ensure a resident clergyman, through legal obligation, providing a residence, and by bolstering their income. Additionally churches would be constructed through Parliamentary loans and grants. The worshippers accessing churches would be swelled in number by the young educated in the Anglican catechism. Information would be gathered to justify bolder reforms, notably renewing Perceval's curates bill.

Bolstering the residency of clergy was one evident priority in both campaigns, acting as a guiding light for all their measures. Perceval's comments in 1808, though applied to England, were equally applicable to Ireland. As he said in his published letter to Mansel in 1808:

I hardly know any thing which would confer a greater blessing on society than to secure generally, in every parish throughout the country, a resident officiating Minister of the Established Church, with such provision for their maintenance as might rescue them from that contempt to which, under a state of indigence, they are almost inevitably exposed.⁷⁷

The chief legal means available to accomplish this goal was the flawed Residence Act of 1803 passed by Sir William Scott, and extended to Ireland in 1808. The law was perceived to have encouraged non-residency and pluralism by its lax regulations. Perceval consequently attempted to counterbalance this laxity by passing a Stipendiary Curates Bill. These would guarantee curates a minimum stipend. In the 1805 bill this would be a fifth of the value of the living where the living was worth more than £400. The latter restriction was removed in the 1806 bill, and reinstated in 1808, being then combined with a maximum curate stipend of

⁷⁷ S. Perceval, *Copy of a Letter to the Revd Dr. Mansel, Master of Trinity College Cambridge on the Subject of the Curates Bill* (London, 1808), p. 4.

£250. Perceval learnt as he persevered, adapting each measure to maximise its chance of success. These efforts enjoyed the support of the Pittites: Pitt, Castlereagh, Hawkesbury, and Harrowby. Plans were drawn up by Irish politicians such as Duigenan and Foster to extend its provisions to Ireland, and the same extension was contemplated in 1811-12 when Perceval consulted on introducing a new bill.⁷⁸ However, a conjunction of radicals such as Sir Francis Burdett and Lord Porchester, factional Foxite opposition, the striking silence of Lord Grenville, and the conservatism of clerics, Oxbridge colleges and Lords Sidmouth and Eldon, all combined to thwart the three proposed bills. A new bill was contemplated in 1811-12; Harrowby introduced an unsuccessful bill in summer 1812; and Perceval's legislative legacy was posthumously secured when an act was passed in 1813.

Parliament was more willing to vote parliamentary grants for the established Churches. In Ireland from 1802 there had been an unsuccessful scheme which granted £45,000 worth in interest-free loans to encourage glebe houses.⁷⁹ In 1807 Perceval supported an inquiry, stating that 'He believed the money directed to be applied for the benefit of the church, by the acts in 1803, had never been properly applied'. The link with residency of clergy was explicitly stated – because residency required clergy to have a 'parsonage house to reside in'.⁸⁰ He prudently waited until he had information called for by Archbishop Stuart. Perceval then provided generous financial support. In 1808 the annual grant to the Irish Board of First Fruits was doubled to £10,000. The Board would lend the money to clergy for procuring, erecting and repairing of churches, chapels, glebe-houses and glebes. Perceval would have preferred an even larger grant.⁸¹ Moreover he supported not merely lending

⁷⁸ CUL, MS Add.8713/II/D: Lord Eldon to Perceval, nd c. 1810; BLRO, WY 994, fo. 64: Brodrick to Stuart, 22 Apr. 1812; Harrowby MSS, Vol. V, fo. 103: Henry to Dudley Ryder, 15 Apr. 1812; fo. 108: Idem, 22 May 1812.

⁷⁹ A. Malcomson, *Archbishop Charles Agar: Churchmanship and Politics in Ireland, 1760-1810* (Dublin, 2002), p. 262.

⁸⁰ *PD*, 1807, ix, 498.

⁸¹ BLRO, WY 995/14(ii): Perceval to Stuart, 12 Apr. 1808.

money, but granting a quarter without repayment for building new churches where none had been for twenty years, which would diminish the burden on the parish including Roman Catholic parishioners.⁸²

In 1809, after the failure of the curates bill, the government acted in England. £100,000 was granted to augment English livings below £50 with resident clergymen. This money was used by the Bounty Board to assist with parsonage-house building.⁸³ The goal was to raise all livings to a minimum £50 within four years, a tenth of the time that the Board's erstwhile efforts would have taken.⁸⁴ Advocating the same grant in 1810 Perceval again invoked the residency of clergy as 'the most important of the objects' that would result.⁸⁵ Nor was the government complacent about Ireland, Perceval writing to Foster that: 'We can not do less than vote them £50,000 more'.⁸⁶ Hence from 1810 £60,000 was annually paid to the Irish Board of First Fruits. Money was targeted on a sliding scale to the poorest livings, with a benefice worth less than £100 receiving £900 grants for house-building and glebe lands alongside another loan equal to two years' income to help build clergymen's homes.⁸⁷ Therefore even during a hugely costly global war Perceval's ministry provided considerable funds to further church reform, both a testimony to its importance to the Pittites and robust evidence of Perceval's establishmentarian allegiances.

Church-building in England was also contemplated. The Pittite reformers were building on the legacy of Henry Addington. The eighteen-month Peace of Amiens presaged many of the post-1815 debates, and ecclesiastical questions were no different. Addington

⁸² *Wellington*, v, p. 433.

⁸³ *Colchester*, ii, p. 187.

⁸⁴ *PD*, 1809, xiv, 920.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 1810, xvii, 231.

⁸⁶ PRONI, D562/2171: Perceval to Foster, nd [c.1809].

⁸⁷ D. Akenson, *The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, 1800-1885* (London, 1971), p. 118.

reputedly contemplated granting funds for church-building.⁸⁸ The war intervened, curtailing the money available. Consequently in England during Perceval's premiership the only parliamentary funds directly devoted to church-repair, rather than going through Queen Anne's Bounty, was the £7,699 4s 4d granted in 1811-12 to repair Henry VII's chapel at Westminster Abbey. Perceval's desire for action was evident in November 1807, when he asked Arthur Wellesley about Irish measures 'for enabling or compelling the erection of glebe-houses and churches. I am desirous of doing something upon this subject in England'. Alongside suggesting improvements to Ireland's approach, Perceval added that 'I think if we could see our way to a due application of money to this object in both parts of the United Kingdom, that Parliament would readily give its assistance to so important an object.'⁸⁹ In the Irish context Perceval wanted to go further than relying on parish funds, proposing to advance a quarter of the whole sum 'without requiring payment either of principal or interest' thereby lessening the burden on the parish.⁹⁰ Perceval and Harrowby were not alone among the Pittites in advocating church construction. In 1811, replying to the Wesleyan Thomas Thompson MP, Lord Liverpool supported church-building and articulated the assumption of a public preference, given a fair choice, for the established Church:

I entirely agree with you in the importance of some measure being adopted to facilitate the Building of additional Churches, being firmly persuaded that the predilection of the Public will be found to be in favour of the Established Church, in almost all cases where the Clergymen are truly Pious & active in the discharge

⁸⁸ 'New Churches', *Anti-Jacobin Review and True Churchman's Magazine*, 41 (1812), p. 82; Senex, *Established Church* 1st edn, p. 84.

⁸⁹ *Wellington*, v, p. 174.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 433.

of their Duties, and where the means of attending Divine Worship, according to the Rights of the Established Church, are duly provided.⁹¹

Given these calls for action, why was little done in England, but much done in Ireland? Partly for legal reasons – building churches in Ireland was easier because the power to alter parishes was vested in the Lord Lieutenant. There existed a body, the Board of First Fruits, empowered to act. In the English case there were two obstacles. First, there were concerns about potential opposition to church-building due to the financial burden it would impose in war-time. Sir John Nicholl proposed a plan in 1811 for giving public loans for church construction to be repaid through an annual local tax.⁹² The principle of local payment was endorsed by Harrowby in 1810, but evidently could prove unpopular among local taxpayers.⁹³ Second, there was a desire to gather information before acting. In 1818 both Harrowby and the Archbishop of Canterbury testified to Perceval's commitment to church-building. Harrowby stated that this was why Perceval had 'in 1810, procured an address for a return of the number of churches and parishioners in the united kingdom'. But Perceval's assassination disrupted these efforts. The Archbishop stated that 'He had in his possession a letter from the right hon. gentleman unhappily no more ... saying, that in five days he should have in hand all the details which would enable him to take some active step', but that Perceval had died 'before the expiration of that time'.⁹⁴ Perceval's plans in England and the action in Ireland presaged the far larger grants, coupled with legislation and a special commission, for church-building enacted in 1818 and 1824, which represented the apogee of pre-1832 church reform.

⁹¹ John Rylands Library, MAW MS4/2, fo. 17: Liverpool to Thompson, 27 May 1811.

⁹² Harrowby MSS, Vol. XVIII, fo. 316: Sir John Nicholl to Perceval, 7 Sep. 1811.

⁹³ Harrowby, *Speech of Harrowby*, p. 26.

⁹⁴ *PD*, 1818, xxxviii, 719.

As Macaulay once observed, administrative action could be as important as legislative action for an early nineteenth-century government.⁹⁵ Administrative actions were as important to implementing church reform as legislation or money. An attitudinal shift, although not reflected in their views on Perceval's curates bill, was occurring among bishops, presaging that traced by Arthur Burns in the 1820s.⁹⁶ Hence Sydney Smith was ordered from Holland House to Foster-le-Clay in Yorkshire, when he received a £1,600 loan from Queen Anne's Bounty to rebuild the parsonage house.⁹⁷ As prime minister Perceval was well placed to assist in matters of administration. Perceval exhorted Pretymann to transform the rectory of Gedney from 'a mere Sinecure' even at the expense of 'valuable patronage'. He vehemently denounced the Revd Thomas Clarke, chaplain at Greenwich Hospital, for his pluralism and non-residency from Ireland.⁹⁸ In 1810 the Lord Chancellor objected to infringements on the royal prerogative resulting from William Stuart's plan to ban pluralities when one living was in a union (where two parishes had been merged together). Perceval obviated this problem by suggesting that George III should order the Lord Lieutenant to direct the Lord Chancellor not to grant more than one living when one was in a union – 'it would effectually accomplish your Grace's object'.⁹⁹ The Perceval ministry was particularly active when money could be granted or administrative changes made without needing parliamentary approval. Harrowby frequently attended meetings of Queen Anne's Bounty Board, which also afforded a gathering point for prelates.¹⁰⁰ He was often the only layman and politician present, implying that he acted as an unofficial ecclesiastical minister, supporting his friend Perceval's

⁹⁵T. Macaulay, *Speeches of Lord Macaulay* (London, 1866), pp. 84-5.

⁹⁶ Burns, *Diocesan Revival*.

⁹⁷ Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, p. 150.

⁹⁸ NLI, MS 63 fo. 889: Perceval to Marquis of Ely, 11 Jan. 1810; Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln, DIOC/Ben/10/22/2: Perceval to Pretymann, 20 Apr. 1812; NMM, CLA/1/B: Perceval to Thomas Clarke, 26 July 1810.

⁹⁹ BLRO, WY 995/20: Perceval to Stuart 4 June 1810.

¹⁰⁰ Church of England Record Centre, South Bermondsey: QAB/2/1/17, fo. 344, 382, 405; QAB/2/1/18, fo. 1, 81, 101, 108, 122, 148, 154, 159, Minutes of Bounty Board.

ecclesiastical endeavours. Alongside granting money to the Irish Board of First Fruit and the English Bounty Board, Harrowby and Perceval also oversaw reforms that consolidated their funds and lifted restrictions on their use, particularly when using the new parliamentary grants.¹⁰¹

The fifth component of the Anglo-Irish church reform campaign was gathering and circulating information, particularly statistics. Information was conveyed through independent pamphlets – for example, that churches in Marylebone had seats for only 300 persons out of 60,000 inhabitants.¹⁰² But government ministers also championed church reform ‘out of doors’. The universities’ opposition to Perceval’s curates bill in 1806 had surprised him.¹⁰³ Consequently in 1808, Perceval ensured that a public letter to William Lort Mansel, his former tutor, in pamphlet form, justifying the measure was circulated in Oxford and Cambridge.¹⁰⁴ Perceval appreciated the effectiveness of such publications. He was likely behind Croker’s 1812 pro-government pamphlet *A key to the orders in council*, and urged that William Vesey Fitzgerald write a defence of Foster’s Irish debt policy.¹⁰⁵ Although Perceval’s pamphlet’s initial circulation was limited, it was serialised in journals and newspapers (such as *The Dublin Journal* and the *Anti-Jacobin Review*), and was notoriously reviewed by Sydney Smith in the *Edinburgh Review*.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, an abstract of his bill

¹⁰¹ TNA, HO 42/97, fo. 167-8, HO 42/98, fo. 122-3, HO 42/100, fo. 87-9; Best, *Temporal Pillars*, p. 216.

¹⁰² Senex, *Established Church* 1st edn, p. 81.

¹⁰³ BL, Add MS 49184, fo. 78: Mansel to Perceval, 25 Apr. 1806; fo. 80-7: Perceval to Mansel, nd [c. 1806]; fo. 92: Perceval to Mansel, 30 Dec. 1806; TCC, G.14.117: ‘Memoir of the Right Rev. William Lort Mansel’ Perceval to Mansel, 26 Apr. 1806, p. 79.

¹⁰⁴ BL, Add MS 49185, fo. 31: Perceval to Mansel, 14 Apr. 1808; TNA, PRO 30/9/15, Box 1: Vice-Chancellor Parsons to Abbot, 25 Apr. 1808.

¹⁰⁵ PRONI, D562/2092: Perceval to Foster, 3 Aug. 1810.

¹⁰⁶ Hampshire Record Office, Winchester 21M57/B36 fo. 18: *The Dublin Journal* (28 May 1808); *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 31 (1808), pp. 390-400; *The Literary Panorama*, 4 (May 1808), pp. 209-26.

appeared in *The Times*.¹⁰⁷ It subsequently attracted effusive, sometimes glutinous, praise.¹⁰⁸

Despite the bill's failure, these attempt to widen support through increased publicity persisted. The returns on non-residency, pluralism and curates, whose gathering Mark Smith has illuminated,¹⁰⁹ were used to buttress the campaign, including the planned reintroduction of Perceval's curates bill. However, the church reformers had broader objectives. In 1810 Harrowby printed his panoramic speech on church reform, complemented by his anonymously published pamphlet supporting greater funds for poor clergymen.¹¹⁰ Harrowby's publications also detailed the returns on non-residency and pluralism provided by bishops sent to the Privy Council under Scott's contentious act. This information helped put the reformers' case on a stronger footing and contributed to their success in securing parliamentary grants.

Church reform policies often appear piecemeal measures. But the sixth aspect that needs recovering are the hints that a more comprehensive plan of action was considered and prepared. Grenville execrated the schemes and principles found in papers, sent by Harrowby through Bishop Pretyman, as surpassing any of 'the Levellers of the present day'. Harrowby possibly suggested elements of this scheme in his wide-ranging, subsequently printed, speech in June 1810. Harrowby first suggested prudently uniting livings and increasing the salaries of future vicars and perpetual curates where tithes were in ecclesiastical hands. Secondly, poor livings could be augmented to increase residency and diminish pluralities, though Harrowby acknowledged 'that pecuniary assistance alone would not be sufficient to place our Church Establishment in security'. Thirdly, curates could be licenced for parishes with non-

¹⁰⁷ *The Times* (23 Apr. 1808), p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Senex, *Established Church* 1st edn, pp. 21-2.

¹⁰⁹ M. Smith (ed.), *Doing the Duty of the Parish: Surveys of the Church in Hampshire, 1810* (Winchester, 2004).

¹¹⁰ TNA, PRO 30/9/15: Harrowby to Abbot, 10 Aug. 1810; Earl of Harrowby, *Speech of Harrowby*; Idem, *A Letter to the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval, on the Augmentation of a Particular Class of Poor Livings without Burthening the Public* (London, 1810).

resident incumbents and receive the whole income of very poor livings. Fourthly, the £100,000 grant could be applied to raise all livings to £100 and populous livings to £150. Fifthly, Harrowby suggested unspecified reforms to the Residence Act and modernisation of the Henrician act on pluralities, probably envisaging restricting pluralities to livings up to ten miles from one another. Sixthly, local taxes would tackle the shortage of church spaces, by drawing on the wealth that had enhanced population and thereby created the shortage. There would be guaranteed spaces for the poor and financial support modelled on the Fifty New Churches Act of 1711. Lastly, Harrowby proposed permitting the immediate sequestering of the profits of livings where the incumbent was non-resident because there was no parsonage-house to correct this want, alongside loans for house construction modelled on similar Irish efforts.¹¹¹ In practice, legislative reform supplemented by pecuniary assistance remained relatively piecemeal until the coming of the Ecclesiastical Commission in Harrowby's twilight years.

The last significant feature of the church reform campaigns are the subtle differences which did exist between England and Ireland. The chief difference between the two campaigns lay in the attitude of bishops. In Ireland there existed a stronger corpus of reforming bishops, albeit often disunited among themselves, led by Primate William Stuart. The Bishop of Meath actually complained of 'the dread of opening the Question of the Church in Ireland, which seems to operate like a Hydrophobia on your English Colleagues'.¹¹² This contrasted with the scepticism of many English bishops towards legislation designed to strengthen the Church. This support was occasionally interspersed with lamentations about the inadequate

¹¹¹ KHC, U1590/S5/02/12: Grenville to Pretyman, 15 Aug. 1809; Harrowby, *Speech of Harrowby*, pp. 10, 12, 16, 18-9, 22-5, 27-9; Idem, *A Letter to the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval, on the Augmentation of a Particular Class of Poor Livings without Burthening the Public* (London, 1810).

¹¹² PRONI, D207/50/8: Lewis O'Beirne to Foster, 10 Apr. 1809.

commitment of Irish clergy,¹¹³ which echoed Redesdale's comment to Harrowby in an English context that 'the Church cannot be left to their own exertions'.¹¹⁴ In both England and Ireland some clerics were dissatisfied with their lay parliamentary champions – the Bishop of Bangor sharply opined that 'Mr P should know a little more of the Church before he legislates for it'.¹¹⁵ Regular clergy expressed public opposition to reform measures.¹¹⁶ Disapprobation was expressed at a lack of consultation with Irish bishops not at Westminster.¹¹⁷ The crucial difference between England and Ireland was that Irish bishops were generally supportive of the need for reform, and their opposition tended not to obstruct the passage of legislation. In England, Perceval's only episcopal confidant was Mansel, whereas Grenville boasted a coterie of episcopal correspondents. The death of Beilby Porteus deprived reformers of an important ally. Perceval strove to foster ecclesiastical support, circulating his pamphlet at Oxford and Cambridge in 1808 to assuage fears. Subsequently he showed his prospective curates bill to erstwhile critics, specifically Eldon and the English bishops.¹¹⁸ Yet the devil lay in the detail. Porteus explained that bishops were reticent about having to administer non-residency, because it meant 'an incredible addition to the Labour & the Responsibility of their Situation'.¹¹⁹ Bishops, as governors of the Bounty Board, also watered down the requirement of 1809 that augmentations and the interest it accrued should be reserved when an incumbent also held a living exceeding £150 per annum.¹²⁰

¹¹³ Ibid., D207/50/2: Idem, 24 Jan. 1808.

¹¹⁴ Harrowby MSS, Vol. XII, fo. 117: Redesdale to Harrowby, 5 June 1808.

¹¹⁵ PRONI, T3030/11/38: Redesdale to William Stuart [?], 30 Apr. 1806; TNA, PRO 30/9/15, Box 1: John Randolph to Abbot, 17 July 1808.

¹¹⁶ For clerical petitions against Perceval's 1808 curates bill see *JC*, 63 (1808), pp. 324-5, 407-8; *JL*, 46 (1808), pp. 752, 768, 774; Senex, *Established Church* 1st edn, p. 48.

¹¹⁷ *Wellington*, v, p. 438.

¹¹⁸ CUL, MS Add.8713/II/D: Lord Eldon to Perceval, nd c. 1810; BLRO, WY 994, fo. 64: Brodrick to Stuart, 22 Apr. 1812.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, MSS 2101, fo. 44: Notebook of Beilby Porteus, entry June 1803.

¹²⁰ Church of England Record Centre, South Bermondsey: QAB/2/1/17, fo. 349-51, 14th resolution of the Bounty Board meeting of 23 June 1809; QAB/2/1/18, fo. 2, 62, minutes of the Bounty Board meetings, 9 May 1810 and 21 Feb. 1811.

Contrastingly, Perceval and his colleagues had good working relations with three prominent Irish clerics: Stuart as Primate, Brodrick as Archbishop of Cashel and Lewis O'Beirne as Bishop of Meath. The latter two were friends of Perceval.

The second subtle difference was the contrasting approaches to schooling in England and Ireland. Historical precedent made direct government action, through parliamentary grants, more apposite in Ireland than in England. Illuminating these similar but different approaches further demonstrates Perceval's Anglicanism, especially his support for the Anglican National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (hereafter the National Society). Pittite actions were a mixture of administrative deeds and voluntary efforts, the pinnacle being the establishment of the National Society. We shall begin by showing the importance of the established Church in English educational debates, which culminated in the National Society's creation, before detailing the Pittite efforts in Ireland, mainly pursued through funding Anglican-connected, proselytising charities.

Pittite church reformers recognised the interconnection of schooling with church reform. Liverpool declared in 1818: 'It was their duty to take care that those who received the benefits of education should not be obliged to resort to dissenting places of worship by finding the doors of the church shut against them'.¹²¹ Educational debates testify to the wish of Perceval and his coterie to uphold the established Church. Pitt's proposal for schools of industry in 1796, and Samuel Whitbread's parochial schools bill in 1807, were intertwined with reforming the Poor Laws. But the rejection of Whitbread's bill by the House of Lords was caused by the perceived lack of an oversight role for Anglican clergy. Bishop John Randolph termed Whitbread's measures 'not friendly to the Church'.¹²² Redesdale

¹²¹ *PD*, 1818, xxxviii, 713.

¹²² Bodleian, MS Top Oxon d. 356, fo. 56: John Randolph to Revd. T. Lambard, 13 Mar. 1807.

condemned Whitbread's bill, because 'little reference it had, in his view of it, to the religious establishments of the country'.¹²³ Perceval had earlier voiced similar concerns about needing to keep religion and education together.¹²⁴ The connection with church reform is aptly demonstrated by the potential members of an enquiry into schooling that Perceval proposed to Speaker Charles Abbot as an alternative to Whitbread's bill.¹²⁵ Being Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster precluded Perceval from serving, but he suggested instead Abbot, Harrowby, Redesdale, the four University members, and two bishops. The only man connected with poor law questions was Abbot's recommendation, Sturges Bourne.¹²⁶ The similarities with the church reform campaign are further demonstrated by George Rose, Treasurer of the Navy, and the Archbishop of Canterbury planning legislation,¹²⁷ and carrying out surveys of school provision across England.¹²⁸ Gathering statistical information replicated the returns already being collected on impecunious curates and non-resident incumbents.

As with church-building, the potential local tax burden that parish schools would impose deterred legislation in England. Financial help was restricted to money being taken from the Duchy of Lancaster's treasury to assist the Rector of Castleford in 1808 in building a school-house.¹²⁹ When the enterprising Gloucestershire clergyman Matthew Proctor asked

¹²³ *PD*, 1807, ix, 1175.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 858.

¹²⁵ *Colchester*, ii, pp. 127-8.

¹²⁶ Parliamentary Archives, HL/PR/RO/1/171: Abbot to Perceval, 20 Apr. 1808.

¹²⁷ C. Southey, *The Life of the Rev. Andrew Bell* (3 vols., London, 1844), ii, p. 606.

¹²⁸ BLRO, W1/3678L Townley Clarkson to Samuel Whitbread, 11 Nov. 1807. Clarkson forwarded W1/3679, a circular letter from two rural deans in the Ely diocese, dated 20 Oct. 1807, which stated that 'Mr Whitbread in the preamble of his Bill having presumed an entire neglect of Education among the poor except in Scotland. His Grace the Arch Bp of Canterbury has written a circular letter to the Bishops requesting them to institute an enquiry respecting the foundation of this presumption. By desire therefore of the Bp of Ely we beg you to inform us whether there be any schools in your parish in which the Children of the poor are taught to read.'

¹²⁹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, A.7: Archbishop of York to Perceval 22 Feb. [1807]; *LCGIII*, v, p. 48.

Perceval for funds to support a school that would teach ‘the purity and excellency of the doctrines of the Establishment’,¹³⁰ Perceval’s hunt for revenue proved fruitless.¹³¹ This marks an important distinction between English and Irish educational action, with taxpayers’ money more liberally distributed in Ireland through parliamentary grants. These individual efforts demonstrate that existing schools had no standard model. Research into Sussex schools has shown a patchwork of free and private grammar schools, Dissenting Academies, poor-rate funded parish schools, petty and dame schools, the burgeoning Sunday schools, and home schooling.¹³² The established Church was already involved through the SPCK-run charity schools, initiated in Queen Anne’s reign before waning in the 1720s.¹³³ Clergymen also spearheaded the growth of Sunday Schools. There was considerable dissatisfaction with existing education provision. Malthus called it ‘a National disgrace’,¹³⁴ declaring that ‘There are ... few countries in Europe in which the peasantry are so ignorant as in England and Ireland’.¹³⁵ However, expanding schooling meant overcoming the interconnected problem of high cost and teacher shortages. The monitorial system of the Revd Andrew Bell, a Scottish Episcopalian whose approach was developed whilst in Madras, seemingly solved this problem. The system’s principle was the ‘new mode of conducting a school through the

¹³⁰ BL, Add MS 38246, fo. 146, 176-7b: Proctor to Perceval, 23 May, 31 July 1811; Add MS 38247, fo. 39: Proctor to Perceval, 17 Jan. 1812.

¹³¹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, Copy Letters: Perceval to Wilberforce, 2 Oct. 1811; BL Add MS 38191, fo. 204: Perceval to Proctor, 15 Jan. 1812; Add MS 38248, fo. 99-101: Proctor to Liverpool, 17 June 1812.

¹³² *Sussex Schools in the 18th Century: Schooling Provision, Schoolteachers and Scholars*, ed. J. Caffyn (Lewes, 1998), pp. 10-13.

¹³³ C. Rose, ‘Evangelical Philanthropy and Anglican Revival: The Charity Schools of Augustan London, 1689-1750’, *The London Journal*, 16 (1991), pp. 35-65; M. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (London, 1964).

¹³⁴ *The Works of Thomas Robert Malthus*, eds. E. Wrigley and D. Souden (6 vols., London, 1986), iii, p. 526.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, iv, p. 18.

medium of the scholars themselves'.¹³⁶ This entailed delegating most of the teaching to the older, more successful boys, who would more directly supervise pupils learning basic reading, writing and arithmetic. This cut costs and lessened the need for teachers. Bell's methods were followed by the Quaker Joseph Lancaster, whose Southwark school gained considerable approbation and ultimately royal subscription in 1805. The monitorial system was hailed as the educational equivalent of Newton's laws, Robert Southey proclaiming that 'Education has been for the first time reduced to a science'.¹³⁷ The practice fell short of the vision: the American writer Louis Simond, when visiting Lancaster's school, commented that 'none [of the children] were doing any thing but playing'.¹³⁸ But contemporaries saw the monitorial system as a viable instrument of mass education.

The divisions which developed between Lancaster and Bell were less about methodology than religion. Lancaster, unlike Bell, did not teach the Anglican catechism, preferring a non-denominational approach. This was unproblematic to Whitbread, who lauded Lancaster publicly, nor for nonconformists, latitudinarian clergymen such as Sydney Smith or Bishop Henry Bathurst of Norwich, or the utilitarian James Mill. They formed the Royal Lancastrian Association, later the British and Foreign Schools Society (BFSS). Their opponents included high-Church critics Archdeacon Charles Daubeny, and the education writer Sarah Trimmer, alongside Coleridge and Southey, and – tellingly – Perceval and his colleagues. Perceval's opposition began by mocking Quakers in Parliament in 1807 during debates on Whitbread's schools bill,¹³⁹ and continued by steadfastly resisting plans for 'Lancastrian' schools in Northampton in 1810. Just as church reform strove to counteract

¹³⁶ A. Bell, *An Experiment in Education, made at the Male Asylum of Madras* (London, 1797), p. 10.

¹³⁷ [R. Southey], 'Bell and Lancaster's Systems of Education', *QR*, 6 (Oct. 1811), p. 302.

¹³⁸ P. Sedra, 'Exposure to the eyes of God: Monitorial Schools and Evangelicals in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Paedagogica Historica*, 47 (2011), p. 273.

¹³⁹ *PD*, 1807, ix, 804.

Dissenters, so Perceval steadfastly resisted nondenominational schools. He argued: ‘I think it is not calculated to educate either a good Church man, nor a good dissenter, nor a good christian’, because having been taught that doctrinal differences were unimportant children would thereafter become resentful of the established Church.¹⁴⁰ Religious discord became such that Thomas Grenville wrote to his brother in November 1811: ‘The little county town of Northampton [Perceval’s constituency] is as hot in the hostilities of Lancaster and Bell as if we were still in the days of Calvin and of Luther’.¹⁴¹ This heightened conflict was because the battle had now been put on an institutional footing.

Anglican clergymen challenged Lancaster’s growing school network by establishing a rival organisation. Herbert Marsh, later Bishop of Peterborough, preaching the annual charity school sermon on 13 June 1811, provided a clarion call for action. Marsh noted that in antiquity and across Christendom ‘the *National Religion* has been made the foundation of *National Education*’. He went on to urge its adoption in England to guard against Lancaster’s neutral religious teaching, which ‘is in *this* case a kind of hostility. It is *hostility* to the Establishment, to deprive our children of that *early* attachment to it, which an education in the Church cannot fail to inspire, and which, if lost in their *youth*, can never after be recovered’.¹⁴² Marsh’s language reflected a growing trend towards notions of national education.¹⁴³ The following day Christopher Wordsworth wrote to a fellow member of the Hackney Phalanx, Henry Handley Norris, citing a SPCK plan from 1748 ‘for erecting

¹⁴⁰ BL, Add MS 49188, fo. 82: George Baker to Perceval, 27 Nov. 1810; fo. 86-8: Perceval to Baker (draft).

¹⁴¹ *HMC Fortescue*, x, p. 182.

¹⁴² H. Marsh, *The National Religion the Foundation of National Education: A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of St Paul, London: on Thursday, June 13, 1811 Being the Time of the Yearly Meeting of the Children Educated in the Charity Schools in and about the Cities of London and Westminster* (London, 1811), pp. 1, 5, 13-14.

¹⁴³ J. Innes, ‘L’« éducation nationale » dans les îles Britanniques, 1765-1815: Variations britanniques et irlandaises sur un thème européen’, *Annales*, 65 (2010), pp. 1087-1116.

English Schools in all the Parishes in England. Why should not something be done now?’¹⁴⁴

The London-based ‘Metropolitan Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church’ was promptly established.

However, existing literature tends to overlook the role of Perceval, the Speaker Charles Abbot, and other politicians. They were neglected in the straightforward narrative of the National Society’s subsequent formation as espoused by the Hackney Phalanx,¹⁴⁵ which gave themselves the bulk of the credit and focused on developments in London. Subsequently this has been generally followed by historians.¹⁴⁶ But the Metropolitan Society was complemented by a similar society, ‘a Society for the Support and Furtherance of the Education of the Infant Poor’ promoted by the education-supporting Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham. Here again we also find evidence of Perceval’s Anglicanism, including how he used administrative action to further the Church’s interests. First, Perceval was supportive of this project, having been hostile to Lancaster’s. This distinguished him from Wilberforce, who tried to support both Bell and Lancaster.¹⁴⁷ Secondly, he circulated the Bishop of Durham’s letter calling for the society through the Post Office, and offered to approach the Prince Regent to gain his patronage. This would ensure support from those otherwise deterred by earlier royal patronage of Lancaster. Barrington eulogistically declared: ‘I have long witnessed your zeal for the principles & interests of the Established Church, but in no instance has that zeal manifested itself more clearly than in the countenance which you

¹⁴⁴ BL, Add MS 46136, fo. 247: Christopher Wordsworth to Henry Handley Norris, 14 June [1811]; fo. 254: Wordsworth to Norris, 26 July 1811.

¹⁴⁵ E. Churton, *Memoir of Joshua Watson*, (2 vols., London, 1861), i, pp. 102-19.

¹⁴⁶ For example, H. Burgess, *Enterprise in Education*, (London, 1958), pp. 21-2; R. Soloway, *Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852* (London, 1969), pp. 372-4.

¹⁴⁷ R. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (5 vols., London, 1838), iii, p. 478; iv, p. 197.

are inclined to give to D^r Bell's valuable plan of educating the poor'.¹⁴⁸ Thirdly, when these two organisations were united into the National Society, the Pittite church reform component was strongly represented. Perceval was offered (though he apparently declined) a vice-presidency.¹⁴⁹ Redesdale and Liverpool were made vice-presidents. Early meetings were attended by Richard Ryder (Harrowby's brother) and Sir John Nicholl,¹⁵⁰ whilst Charles Abbot also attended their committee meetings. Perceval gave £100 to the Society, alongside £50 (and the £5 annual subscription) to the Northampton Diocesan Society, one of the first auxiliary organisations founded.¹⁵¹ Perceval and Abbot liaised in early 1812 over whether the Society's schools should be open to Dissenters' children who did not attend establishment churches. There were difference between clerics and politicians on this subject. The Bishops of London and Carlisle, along with Handley Norris, favoured exclusion; whereas Abbot, Perceval, and Redesdale, supported inclusion. Perceval and Abbot produced a compromise that let individual schools decide.¹⁵² The National Society and the BFSS subsequently formed the backbone of the pre-1870 Victorian school system. Support for the National Society was also an extension of the wider church reform campaign, which foreshadowed the 1818 Church-Building Commission in showing how clerics and politicians could work together to strengthen the established Church.

In Ireland a tradition of Parliamentary grants to charitable societies dated back to the 1730s. The problem was how to persuade Roman Catholics to attend schools notorious for proselytising, or else establish an educational system on denominational or non-

¹⁴⁸ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXVI.92: Bishop of Durham to Perceval, 27 Aug. 1811; see also Southey, *Bell*, p. 630 and *CPW*, viii, pp. 122-3.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, PRO 30/9/5: Bishop of London to Charles Abbot, 16 Oct. 1811.

¹⁵⁰ Church of England Record Centre, South Bermondsey NS1/3/2, minutes of the National Society meetings 3 Dec. 1811 and 11 Dec. 1811.

¹⁵¹ *First Annual Report of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church* (London, 1812), pp. 98, 188.

¹⁵² *Colchester*, ii, pp. 352, 362-4, 391.

denominational lines. Once schooled it was confidently believed that Catholic children would drift towards Protestantism. Even the radical former Lunar Society member, Richard Lovell Edgeworth wrote that ‘The absurdities of Popery are so glaring ‘that to be hated, they need but to be seen’’.¹⁵³ How to overcome the obstacle of Catholic ecclesiastical resistance preoccupied the Board of Education established by the Talents to enquire into Irish education in 1807, and which continued until 1813. Its ecclesiastical members helped ensure that existing Protestant Charter Schools, previously heavily criticised, received a favourable report. The ongoing enquiry limited government action, but we can construe two trends. One was confidence that Irish schooling was expanding. Arthur Wellesley confidently claimed that Ireland had more schools and pupils than England, reckoning that 200,000 Irish were receiving education.¹⁵⁴ Wellesley Pole noted that parish schools – ‘the foundation of whatever was done’ in Irish schooling – had increased from 361 institutions and 11,000 pupils in 1788 to 549 establishments and 23,000 children by 1811.¹⁵⁵ A second trend was the government abetting the Protestantising of Ireland through increased grants to known proselytising, voluntary organisations. Peel’s statement in 1814 reflected a policy inherited from previous Pittite ministries: ‘nothing would be more likely to impede its [education’s] advances than the ostentatious interference of Government. Much may be done to encourage it, but the more quietly it is done the better’.¹⁵⁶ Perceval had in 1807 considered the ‘revision & improvement of the System of the Protestant Charter Schools in Ireland’ as integral to Protestantisation, alongside bolstering Trinity College Dublin and the established Church.¹⁵⁷ Under the Portland and Perceval administrations the annual grant to the Incorporated Society,

¹⁵³ *(Ireland.) Reports, presented to the House of Commons, from the Commissioners of the Board of Education in Ireland. I. Free schools of Royal Foundation. II. Schools of Navan and Ballyroan, of Private Foundation. III. The Protestant Charter Schools.* (1809) p. 109.

¹⁵⁴ *Wellington*, v, pp. 151, 274, 344.

¹⁵⁵ *PD*, 1811, xx, 149-50.

¹⁵⁶ *Colchester*, ii, p. 519.

¹⁵⁷ BL, Add MS 49182, fo. 142: speech draft on Maynooth grant for 4 Mar. 1807.

which ran Charter Schools, rose from £23,270 in 1807 to £41,539 by 1812. A similar increase occurred for the Association for Discountenancing Vice, and promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion, from £1,262 to £2,423. As with impoverished clergymen, in Ireland reforms depended on parliamentary grants. Contrastingly, in England bishops were more supportive than of church reform legislation, because the status quo in England ensured that a voluntary approach was taken. However, both efforts were part of wider church reform, seeking to strengthen and enlarge the established Church.

Military Church Reform

The chapter's second section focuses on church reform in the military. This involved enhancing the number and quality of naval and army chaplaincies, and bolstering military education founded on establishmentarian principles. The approach adopted echoes Anglo-Irish church reform. Administrative action conjoined with parliamentary funds to implement policies to ensure resident, properly paid, and capable chaplains; to replace political patronage with meritocratic appointments made by prelates; and to proliferate education founded on Anglican principles among military personnel. Perceval was again the chief instigator of reform. There were two differences. One was in personnel, Perceval's main supporters being Charles Yorke (the First Lord of the Admiralty), Lord Palmerston (the Secretary at War), and George Rose (the Treasurer of the Navy), rather than Harrowby and Redesdale. Secondly, although the reforms had similar goals and policies to Anglo-Irish efforts, they were never explicitly integrated into wider church reform. Historiographically, recognition of these changes complements attention to the military-administrative reforms detailed by Roger Knight, helps to correct the image of the war-time Pittites as irredeemably

reactionary, and evidences Perceval commitment to the established Church.¹⁵⁸ This section complements the existing specialist literature by emphasising Perceval's role in instigating these reforms. It ties together the disparate efforts made across the services, which previous scholarship has tended to separate. Hence Williams has traced the history of army education,¹⁵⁹ whilst Snape focused on army chaplaincies.¹⁶⁰ Taylor and Rodger have studied naval chaplains,¹⁶¹ and Dickinson and Sullivan have concentrated on naval education.¹⁶² All have been over long chronological periods and have been separate from the historiography of church reform. Perceval therefore provides an apex on which these different themes converge. This section begins by detailing the existing impulses for reform, in army and navy, in terms of chaplaincies and then education, highlighting Pittite plans. It then illuminates Perceval's involvement in reforming army chaplaincies in 1809 and naval chaplaincies in 1811. The latter change linked with improving naval schoolmasters, and this precedes examination of Perceval's role, alongside the Duke of York, in introducing army schools.

During the Napoleonic Wars military chaplaincies were unfashionable and often perceived as sinecures. The situation had begun, particularly in the navy, to improve during the conflict.¹⁶³ But more could be done and in accomplishing this Perceval took the lead. In 1803, he explicitly connected Providence with military glory:

¹⁵⁸ R. Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: The Organisation of Victory, 1793-1815* (London, 2013), pp. 313-49.

¹⁵⁹ N. Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children: The Story of the Education of the Army's Children 1675-1790* (London, 1971).

¹⁶⁰ M. Snape, *The Royal Army Chaplains' Department, 1796-1953: Clergy Under Fire* (Woodbridge, 2008).

¹⁶¹ N. Rodger, 'The Naval Chaplain in the Eighteenth Century', *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 18 (1995) pp. 34-45; G. Taylor, *The Sea Chaplains: A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy* (Oxford, 1978).

¹⁶² H. Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy: 18th and 19th Century Education for Officers* (London, 2007); F. Sullivan, 'The Naval Schoolmaster during the Eighteenth Century and the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 62 (1976), pp. 311-26.

¹⁶³ Rodger, 'Naval Chaplain', pp. 34-45.

He particularly concurred in the sentiment, that the situations of chaplains to the navy should be well filled; and it was to this circumstance that he attributed the conduct of our sailors, who, in the hour of victory, did not fail to recollect the hand that led them to it.¹⁶⁴

Perceval's first efforts were concentrated on the army chaplaincy. This had undergone reforms during the 1790s. Contrasting with the anti-Christian ethos perceived to suffuse the French, clergymen had been blessing standards and placed on active service. In 1796 an Army Chaplains Department was established and the chaplaincy overhauled, old regimental chaplains being pensioned off.¹⁶⁵ The navy also had seen initial enthusiasm – the Archbishop of Canterbury was informed in 1793 that 'the young clergy, in general [are] so eager to go as chaplains on board the ships'.¹⁶⁶ But this zeal waned. Inflation eroded salaries and by 1806 the Duke of York reckoned most army chaplains 'extremely unfit for such a station'.¹⁶⁷ Despite brigade chaplaincy pay being raised to equal that of an infantry major, the problem was acute enough that no clergy accompanied Wellesley's force to Portugal in 1808.¹⁶⁸ Fewer than one in ten chaplains were resident in the established overseas garrisons.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile the Navy presented a curious picture. The rise of naval evangelicals, most memorably Charles Middleton and Lord Gambier, has been highlighted by Gareth Atkins.¹⁷⁰ Nelson,

¹⁶⁴ *PR*(2), 1803, iii, p. 137.

¹⁶⁵ Snape, *Army Chaplains*, pp. 26-8.

¹⁶⁶ Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, p. 218.

¹⁶⁷ Snape, *Army Chaplains*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 32; TNA, W.O.43/578, fo. 191: Perceval's memorandum on army chaplaincy, 17 Jan. 1809.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, W.O.43/578, fo. 190: Perceval's memorandum on army chaplaincy, 17 Jan. 1809.

¹⁷⁰ G. Atkins, 'Christian Heroes, Providence, and Patriotism in Wartime Britain, 1793-1815', *HJ*, 58 (2015), pp. 393-414; R. Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy, 1775-1815: Blue Lights and Psalm Singers* (Woodbridge, 2008).

despite his colourful private life, eagerly acquired SPCK material for his men, and on the morning of Trafalgar he was busy composing a prayer.¹⁷¹ But, as Charles Yorke told Parliament in 1812, there were only 39 chaplains in the Navy.¹⁷² Payment of 4d monthly per sailor served incentivised service on larger ships to the neglect of smaller vessels.¹⁷³ Furthermore, clerical positions in the army and navy were often sinecures. Thus, chaplaincies were ripe for reform. Let us now turn to their intertwined companion, military education.

Army education was not new. Schools for army children originated with the Tangier garrison of the seventeenth century, several regimental schools had already been voluntarily established, and Bell's system was introduced to the Royal Military Asylum at Chelsea in 1807 and the Royal Hibernian School in Dublin in 1808.¹⁷⁴ The war meant that the interconnection of military skills and education was strongly felt.¹⁷⁵ Charles Yorke, as Secretary at War in 1801, championing the new Sandhurst Military College, lamented that 'the system of modern British education' failed to instil the 'rudiments and foundations of science' necessary for army life, instead concentrating on 'the rudiments of grammar, and a taste for the dead languages, with little or no attention to the principles of science'.¹⁷⁶ Yorke later urged 'all our youths in public schools to be instructed in the use of arms, and that the military art should be part of public education'.¹⁷⁷ His view was echoed by William Smith MP, who recommended extending the military training proposed so controversially by the Talents' minister William Windham to schoolchildren.¹⁷⁸ Whitbread claimed that Scottish

¹⁷¹ W. Allen and E. McClure, *The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London, 1898), p. 456.

¹⁷² *PD*, 1812, xxi, 885.

¹⁷³ Rodger, 'Naval Chaplain', p. 35.

¹⁷⁴ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, pp. 3, 9-14.

¹⁷⁵ Wilberforce praised a scheme put to him in 1802, Bodleian, MS Wilberforce c. 52, fo. 88: Wilberforce to ?, 6 Jan. 1802.

¹⁷⁶ *PH*, xxxv, 1451-2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid* xxxvi, 1629.

¹⁷⁸ *PD*, 1806, vii, 921-2.

soldiers were the best ‘because the Scots were in general the best educated’.¹⁷⁹ Perceval was appointed one of the commissioners of the Royal Military College in July 1809.¹⁸⁰ The Military Asylum at Chelsea was also flourishing. By 1807 it was reportedly educating 580 boys and 216 girls, the children being ‘taught trades, such as making shoes, clothes, &c’. The asylum was modelled on ‘similar establishments in Russia and Prussia, where they exist upon a much more magnificent scale. This asylum is raised upon the auspices of the Duke of York, and is very creditable to his feelings and judgment’.¹⁸¹ By 1809-10 an additional school had been established on the Isle of Wight which increased the number of children being educated to 1140 children, the children or orphans of soldiers.¹⁸²

Notions of sending children into the navy to compensate for the inadequacies of charity schools had been voiced in 1741, foreshadowing the creation of the Marine Society in 1756.¹⁸³ The Navy was also the last resort for boys expelled from public schools, as Perceval warned his eldest son, because ‘military discipline & control ... are alone capable of controlling a temper which is ungovernable at school’.¹⁸⁴ As the Navy expanded, George Rose endeavoured to marry education for the poor with naval needs. Rose’s idea, outlined initially in 1807, was to provide children in maritime regions with an education incorporating naval and fishing expertise that would prepare them for life in the Navy.¹⁸⁵ Castlereagh, in September 1807, proposed to Rose special seminaries for three years prior to their attendees joining the army and wished to amalgamate their schemes.¹⁸⁶ Concurrently Rose observed to

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 1807, ix, 549.

¹⁸⁰ BL, Add MS 88914/7: George III to Perceval 21 July 1809.

¹⁸¹ [Anon], *Letters from an Irish student in England to his Father in Ireland* (2 vols., London 1809), ii, pp. 114-15.

¹⁸² Williams, *Tommy Atkins’ Children*, p. 18.

¹⁸³ PH, xii, 66, 84.

¹⁸⁴ King’s College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Maurice 1/3: Perceval to Spencer Perceval the Younger, 8 Oct. [1808?].

¹⁸⁵ PD, 1807, ix, 540.

¹⁸⁶ Castlereagh, viii, p. 84.

Perceval : ‘I have also a Plan, easy and unobjectionable, for sending 20,000 Boys (who will be easily found) into the Merchant Service: – and a Suggestion for taking off about 7000 more for the Navy’.¹⁸⁷ The government did not implement Rose’s plan directly, but rather substituted for it a proposal to recruit from parochial schools. This was conveyed through letters to the county Lord Lieutenants urging magistrates to encourage trustees to identify boys suitable for the navy, and permitting free conveyance of more than ten boys from a parish to port.¹⁸⁸ This policy may have been adopted. A report in September 1809 described:

four coaches filled with 100 fine young lads, apparently 13 or 14 years old, in new blue jackets, trousers, and cockades, proceeding from St James’s, through the streets towards the City, with loud huzzas and other demonstrations of joy. We learnt that these boys had been educated by the parish of St. James, Westminster, for the naval service, and were proceeding, completely equipped, to make their naval entries. We think this a very laudable example, and trust that it will be followed in all the parochial schools in the kingdom.¹⁸⁹

In 1810 Rose introduced his bill to establish coastal naval seminaries to train boys for four to five years before sending them to sea, which met with a favourable response.¹⁹⁰ Thus one connection of education and the Navy was using the former to prepare boys for the latter. This manifested itself in another, official capacity, in the reforms which saw the oversubscribed Naval Academy at Portsmouth replaced by the Royal Naval College. This cost almost £5,000, accommodated 70 students, and had a new and academic staff teaching

¹⁸⁷ CUL, Add MS 8713/XVII fo. 4: Rose to Perceval, 23 Sep. 1807.

¹⁸⁸ *Bury and Norwich Post* (9 Nov. 1808) p. 2; *Aberdeen Journal* (7 Dec. 1808), p. 4; TNA H.O. 42/94, fo. 52a: Mayor John Ansley to Lord Hawkesbury, 5 Nov. 1808.

¹⁸⁹ *Morning Post* (22 Sep. 1809), p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ *PD*, 1810, xvii, 468-9; *The Edinburgh Annual Register*, 3 (Jan. 1810), p. 160.

subjects as diverse as mathematics and fencing. Perceval may well have influenced the appointment of its second master, the Revd. William Tate, who had hitherto been junior dean and junior bursar at Trinity College, Cambridge.¹⁹¹ A further thousand children were (by 1815) educated at the Royal Naval Asylum at Greenwich.¹⁹²

Alongside education ashore there was renewed interest in bolstering provision onboard ship. In 1802 ship's chaplain Joshua Larwood had published a thirteen-page article in the *Naval Chronicle* which suggested combining chaplains and schoolmasters, thereby refuting the claim that chaplains were 'an Idler' six days of the week. Larwood wanted cooperation with the universities to identify ideal students, turning naval chaplaincy into a specific profession, overseen by a Naval Chaplain General and boasting a special uniform. Chaplains were included, for the first time, in the *Regulations and Instructions relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea* in 1806. Gordon Taylor claims that from that year chaplains could be schoolmasters, receiving a £20 bonus for doing so, though this evidently was unknown by Perceval.¹⁹³ Either way the two problems were intertwined. Reforms to the schoolmaster's responsibilities in 1806 had narrowed their educational duties, only obliging that mathematics be taught and ending the need to teach boys other than would-be lieutenants, whilst requiring schoolmasters to 'attend to their [children's] morals'. But this did not arrest a decline in schoolmaster numbers.¹⁹⁴ Boosting clerical pay and introducing a person ideally situated to superintend moral needs made the decision to conjoin the posts of schoolmasters and chaplain sensible.

¹⁹¹ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 46-7.

¹⁹² *PD*, 1815, xxx, 255.

¹⁹³ Taylor, *Sea Chaplains*, pp. 227-9, 232.

¹⁹⁴ F. Sullivan, 'The Naval Schoolmaster during the Eighteenth Century and the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 62 (1976), p. 321; Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 19.

Let us now turn to Perceval's involvement. His commitment to Christianising the armed forces meant that he championed various policies, large and small. He supported refurbishing Whitehall chapel at public expense to accommodate London-based troops, bringing the idea before the Treasury Board in July 1808.¹⁹⁵ Adjutant-General Calvert wrote to Perceval asking that the Guards regiments have access to Westminster Abbey for divine service. As the Bishop of London acknowledged, writing to Perceval having seen Calvert's letter, 'too true' was the picture of neglect of religion 'in that department where it is most essentially necessary; the military Establishment of this Country both at Home & abroad'.¹⁹⁶ The way to correct this was through reforming army chaplains. Perceval took, as Secretary at War Granville Leveson-Gower remarked, 'so anxious an interest' in this subject.¹⁹⁷ He was not alone. Calvert's concerns were also conveyed to the Duke of York and in June 1808 the War Office was approached with a plan to abolish unnecessary clergy, increase pay to 16s a day for home and 17s a day for overseas service, introduce half-pay upon leaving the service, place chaplains at every garrison, make chaplains eligible for active service, and give them the rank of staff officers. The War Office raised objections to most of these proposals,¹⁹⁸ whereas, having received Calvert's letter, Perceval supported action. He later explained to Yorke that:

The great object was to procure if possible effectual & not nominal discharge of duty; & to prevent the institution from falling into a new Source of jobbing patronage and sinecure Emolument – and at the same time to afford from its Scale

¹⁹⁵ TNA, T29/95, fo. 311-13: Treasury Board minutes, 4 July 1808.

¹⁹⁶ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXIV.15: Bishop of London to Perceval, 29 Feb. 1808.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, D.191: Leveson-Gower to Perceval, 12 July 1809.

¹⁹⁸ Snape, *Army Chaplains*, pp. 32-3.

of reward, such a temptation to men of Character to embark on it as might be sufficient to procure respectability to the Establishment.¹⁹⁹

Turning this ambition into reality was outlined in a lengthy memorandum of 17 January 1809. Disclaiming ‘false economy’ as grounds for opposing action, Perceval then stressed that it was important to ‘ensure a real and efficient discharge of duty on the part of the Chaplains’. To tackle non-residency overseas he proposed ‘that the regular Garrison Chaplains at the Foreign Stations, and the dependencies of the country, should be made effective and required to be resident’. Leave of absence should be restricted. It was ‘of the greatest importance’ that chaplains visit the sick in hospital. No chaplains engaged in service should be allowed to hold a living or cure. He proposed that chaplains should have eight-year commissions and that half-pay (during and after the commission’s completion) be fixed at 5s per day. This would ‘at once place the Chaplain on a most respectable footing’. A desire ‘to procure respectable characters for this service’ meant that Perceval contemplated permitting those on half-pay with a commission to hold another position for less pay. He proposed twenty-nine chaplains in overseas garrisons and twenty-four in home garrisons. All existing chaplains would need to obtain certification of their fitness. Lastly, and tellingly, Perceval was keen:

to introduce the authority or sanction of one or more of the Bishops to the appointments which may be made; I believe it would be very easy to obtain the Assistance of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London or both of them, if it were thought proper: – How far it might be acceptable to either of these Prelates, to take the whole of this subject under their immediate Controul [sic],

¹⁹⁹ BL, Add MS 45036 fo. 108-9: Perceval to Yorke, nd [1811].

and under the name of Chaplain General of the Army, or any other denomination, which might be thought more suitable to preside over the whole Establishment – I do not know; but if such an Arrangement would be acceptable to the Commander in Chief, & Secretary at War, I would make it my business to learn ... At all events I conceive Assistance in some shape might be obtained from the Church; and I think great advantage might be obtained to the Service by the introduction in this, or in some such manner, of the sanction of one of these Prelates to the Appointments.²⁰⁰

Perceval was thereby trusting the prelacy with appointing chaplaincies, and surrendering important government patronage. More than his reluctant countenancing of episcopal oversight of stipends for curates, this measure indicated his willingness to empower the highest ranks of the established Church.

This memorandum formed, down to identical phraseology, the basis for subsequent policy. In May 1809, a draft Treasury Board minute sent from Perceval to Leveson Gower clarified the outstanding issue that no discretion should be permitted for pluralism while on half pay. It added an additional chaplain to overseas and home stations respectively, and announced the prelates' acquiescence to their new role.²⁰¹ The role of prelates occasioned some debate and delay, meaning that this draft minute was not finalised until November 1809.²⁰² The upheavals surrounding the creation of Perceval's ministry doubtless distracted all concerned. Moreover, in July 1809 Perceval faced the objections from Leveson Gower, who opposed giving nomination and selection of chaplains to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishop of London. Perceval insisted that government funding was

²⁰⁰ TNA, W.O. 43/578, fo. 189-200: Perceval's memorandum, 17 Jan. 1809.

²⁰¹ Ibid, fo. 181-8: Draft of a proposed Treasury Minute.

²⁰² Ibid, fo. 211-20: Treasury Board minute, 3 Nov. 1809.

conditional on introducing ‘that improvement in the System which would be produced in any opinion by transferring the nomination to the Archbishops’. Leaving it to the Secretary at War ‘appears to me as absurd as it would be to desire the Archbishops or Bishops to appoint Generals & Commanders’.²⁰³ Both men agreed that the status quo was unacceptable. But Gower contended that repudiating the role of the Secretary at War was problematic: ‘upon that principle all the patronage of Livings now at the disposal of the Chancellor & of private individuals ought to be transferred to the Archbishop & Bishop’.²⁰⁴ This impasse was ended by Leveson Gower’s resignation amid the breakdown of Portland’s ministry, and his replacement by Lord Palmerston. Perceval was unwilling directly to curtail lay patronage in a civilian setting, when those laymen were private individuals. But he did support reducing clerical sinecures, and therefore supported the government relinquishing military patronage to improve the quality of clergy. As with spending scarce resources on poor clergy we see the established Church’s high standing in Perceval’s priorities.

As prime minister Perceval acted swiftly to implement the chaplaincy reforms. Palmerston described the meeting that resolved the outstanding question of patronage:

I have been attending a conclave of the most heterogeneous composition, consisting of an Archbishop, a Bishop, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, a Commander in Chief, a Quarter Master General and a Secy at War. The Archbishop played his part to admiration, expressed the reluctance with which he undertook the onus imposed upon him, but he yielded to Perceval’s intreaties [*sic*] from his regard for the public good, although he did not view it as any accession of *patronage* or *power*. It appears that the holding of any other preferment will be a

²⁰³ Ibid, PRO 30/29/13/6/199, fo. 618: Perceval to Leveson Gower, 11 July 1809.

²⁰⁴ Holland (Perceval) Papers, D.9: Leveson Gower to Perceval, 12 July 1809.

bar to the continuance of a Garrison Chaplain, & that all Chaplains will be liable to be called upon to go on service though of course where there are great bodies of troops stationed that call will be less probable than elsewhere.²⁰⁵

Royal approval was granted in December 1809. When, three months later, John Gamble, the Chaplain-General, retired due to poor health, John Owen was recruited to replace him, being furnished with a salary of £800 per annum.²⁰⁶

Owen was different from the administrator Gamble. Owen's father had been a friend of Wesley. Owen had served in India alongside holding various military and civilian chaplaincies. He brought an evangelical zeal to the position. The new regime had to cope with the immediate resignation of fifteen chaplains (all existing chaplaincies had been revoked and reconfirmed case-by-case), twelve of whom were garrison chaplains. Consequently, Owen introduced a post of 'Home Chaplain', receiving a lower salary of £250 per annum and lacking other perquisites, which he saw as a useful probationary position.²⁰⁷ But reforms need to be made to work. One area focused on were hospitals – which Owen in September 1810 had complained were targeted by Dissenters, requiring a counteracting proliferation of bibles, the Book of Common Prayer and tracts, and twice weekly visits by the chaplain. In March 1811 Owen told Samuel Briscall, senior army chaplain in Portugal, that Perceval 'has directed that it shall be a law of the service ... Mr. Perceval has with reason required me to see that we have no indolent men in our corps'.²⁰⁸ Perceval's support meant that the Treasury Board concurred with Palmerston and Owen in placing 'Bibles &c for the

²⁰⁵ *The Palmerston-Sullivan Letters 1804-1863*, ed. K. Bourne (Camden Soc, 4th Series, 23, 1973), p. 116.

²⁰⁶ TNA, W.O. 43/578, fo. 173-7: Memorandum for George III, 16 Dec. 1809; fo. 205: Treasury Board minute, 6 Feb. 1810; fo. 208: War Office to John Owen, Mar. 1810.

²⁰⁷ Snape, *Army Chaplains*, pp. 34, 36.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 40-1.

use of the Sick in Military Hospitals for Home Station’ and sending them overseas.²⁰⁹ These efforts bore fruit – in 1809 there had been nineteen brigade chaplains and two attached to the garrisons of Gibraltar, Malta, Sicily and Cape Town. By 1811 there were thirty-eight staff chaplains (alongside the home chaplains), including sixteen in the Iberia, two in Gibraltar, five in Sicily, three in England, with the remainder scattered across the world.²¹⁰

Helping naval chaplains built on army chaplaincy reforms. Action had previously been taken. Lord Mulgrave, when First Lord of the Admiralty, supported legislation to divide Simonburne, in Northumberland, a ‘most extensive & unweildy [*sic*] parish into several parishes, & to provide a due reward and encouragement to the meritorious & long professional services of naval chaplains’.²¹¹ Perceval and Mulgrave’s successor, Charles Yorke, conversed on ‘the defective provision for navy chaplains’ and in 1811 Perceval called for action. He commended the new army chaplaincy establishment, ‘which I believe to be working very well at present, considering the little time that it has prevailed’, and John Owen ‘whose heart is very much in the Service, and who I believe superintends the whole very ably and well’. He explained that it ‘was a great point’ to relinquish government patronage which would preclude the creation of ‘a new Source of jobbing patronage’. This was the model he envisaged for the navy – sending Yorke the ‘Terms of Service of Army Chaplains’. Perceval was willing to bear the added expense of reform, and proposed:

I think you might connect the duty of the Chaplain with that of the Schoolmaster on board your ships.

I think if possible no Ship of the Line should go to sea without a Chaplain; if it be possible to procure respectable people for them all – & considering the

²⁰⁹ TNA, T29.108, fo. 240: Treasury Board minutes, 22 Nov. 1810.

²¹⁰ Snape, *Army Chaplains*, p. 46.

²¹¹ *LCGIII*, v, p. 93.

numbers of Boys, on board such Ships, the School, is a very important Consideration. I should be glad to extend the arrangement to Frigates & Smaller Ships, but at first I imagine numbers of Chaplains would be wanting; tho' in time, I am satisfied, the very existence of the institution if put upon a proper footing, would, when known, create a supply of sufficient numbers.

I conceive this be a very great and important Consideration, and I am sure it cannot be in better hands than yours, if you can but find time to attend to it.²¹²

Unlike Leveson Gower, Yorke was evidently sympathetic. On 23 December 1811 Perceval wrote again: 'You will see what has occurred to me upon the subject of your minute about Naval Chaplains, if you can read my pencil marginal observations. I feel great anxiety to see this Establishment put upon a good footing, & I thank you much for the attention you have been so good as to pay to it'.²¹³ Probably Perceval's most significant suggestion was to consult Owen. Consequently, Owen effectively proposed himself for the new position of Naval Chaplain General, exhorting that: 'There is perhaps no order of men upon whom the labour of an intelligent clergyman could be bestowed with greater prospect of success than on seamen'.²¹⁴ With Perceval's encouragement Owen became Naval Chaplain General, an appointment that provoked ire among maritime men. They were dubious about a landlubber being empowered (with the senior prelates' approval) to circumvent their traditional privilege of selecting their own chaplain.²¹⁵ In other respects the proposals also followed the army's example – all ships were to have a chaplain, there would be eight years' service at sea (or ten on a guard-ship), absence was limited to under six consecutive weeks, pluralism was

²¹² BL, Add MS 45036, fo. 108-12: Perceval to Yorke, nd [1811?].

²¹³ Ibid, fo. 122: Perceval to Yorke, 23 Dec. 1811.

²¹⁴ Taylor, *Sea Chaplains*, p. 236.

²¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 237-40.

prohibited, and provision was made for pension and half-pay. The only major difference was that:

when the chaplain shall be willing to act as schoolmaster, he shall be entitled to the bounty of £20 a year, granted by her late Majesty Queen Anne, by her order in council of the 21st of April, 1702, provided he shall pass an examination before the Lieutenant-Governor, Professor, and Preceptor of the Royal Navy College at Portsmouth, instead of at the Trinity-house, as required by the abovementioned order in council; and he shall be farther entitled to five pounds per annum, to be paid to him by every young midshipman and volunteer of the first class, as a remuneration for his education, the same to be stopped out of the said young gentleman's pay.²¹⁶

This conjoining of roles subsequently attracted comment and approbation when Yorke announced the naval estimates on 22 February 1812.²¹⁷

On the same day Palmerston delivered the army estimates, during which he outlined the creation of serjeant schoolmasters and the establishment of a school for every battalion.²¹⁸ Having seen how naval chaplaincy reform was tied to onboard education, let us now examine another major military reform: army schools. Perceval's support demonstrates his willingness to occasionally use state-funding, his preference for charitable activities, and the importance of connecting education with the Anglican Church. Bell's method of education was approved by Owen and by the Commander-in-Chief Frederick Duke of York, second son of George III. A poor campaign commander in 1793-5 and 1799, York restored his reputation through his

²¹⁶ *The Literary Panorama, and National Register*, 11 (1812), p. 1051.

²¹⁷ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 887-8.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 894.

administrative reforms before being forced to resign in 1809 when Mary Anne Clarke, his former mistress, alleged he was complicit in her sale of army positions. He was reappointed in 1811 and on 15 August, having recently conversed with Perceval, brought to his consideration 'the necessity of attention being paid to the education of young soldiers and soldiers' children, by the Establishment of Regimental Schools throughout the Service'.²¹⁹

Perceval greeted York's suggestion enthusiastically. He was pleased at the low monetary cost, and claimed that he had 'had occasion to observe the pride & satisfaction with which some officers have spoken upon the success of these Schools, as adopted by themselves & their regiments'. Perceval's main suggestion was to graft existing schools onto the proposed system, because aside from a 'very inconsiderable [financial] saving ... I treat it possible that the Regiments in general might be more likely to take an interest and a pride in the Success of the school, if they were in a manner more their own, than they would be if supported by the public'. York argued that it was impossible to order continual charitable donations for regimental schools, adding that 'It is a proper reward to such zeal, to give such assistance from Government as is proposed by the Establishment of permanent schoolmasters'.²²⁰ Following this exchange York arranged for Bell to oversee the training of the prospective sergeant-schoolmasters.²²¹ The schools' objective, as articulated in York's General Order of 1 January 1812, was one of which Perceval would have approved: 'It is extremely essential that children's minds should be impressed with early habits of order, regularity, and discipline, derived from a well-grounded respect and veneration for the Established Religion of the Country'. Consequently, oversight of army schooling would reside with the Chaplain's Department.²²²

²¹⁹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXII.63: duke of York to Perceval, 15 Aug. 1811.

²²⁰ Ibid 63b, 64: Perceval to duke of York, 17 Aug. 1811 (draft), duke of York to Perceval, 21 Aug. 1811.

²²¹ Southey, *Bell*, pp. 377-9.

²²² Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, pp. 27, 35.

Bell's involvement did not go undebated. The Earl Grosvenor, discussing the Mutiny Bill in the Lords, approved that the 'military schools were founded on the principles of the established religion of the country', but, although supporting the use of the Madras system of education, he thought it absurd to reject improvements proposed by Joseph Lancaster or others. He also criticised compelling soldiers to attend schools, which would not work any more 'than it would be to force them to learn to dance'. Liverpool offered a brief response: 'As to what the noble earl had said on the subject of education, it appeared to him to apply rather to diocesan than to military schools. But, it was his firm belief, that if any improvement in those schools were suggested, it would be carried into effect'.²²³ Whitbread initiated a similar debate in the Commons, where there was criticism of the idea that soldiers would be forced to attend. Evidently some ambiguity existed on this subject, for Perceval 'stated it not to have been the intention of the duke of York to make the attendance of the men compulsory, though much advantage was expected from the establishment of schools in the army'.²²⁴

The reforms therefore had wide, though not universal, support among politicians, particularly on the role of the established Church. Given Perceval's position as both head of the administration and holder of the purse strings his approbation was vital to ensuring its adoption. It constitutes another piece within the wider jigsaw portraying his importance in bolstering the established Church's position in the armed forces. Perceval's role in these policies varied. He was an enthusiastic supporter of York's plan for army education, and presumably supported attempts to boost naval recruitment. His greater significance lay in spearheading improvements in army and naval chaplaincies. All these endeavours testify to his commitment to strengthen Christianity and the Anglican Church within the military.

²²³ *PD*, 1812, xxii, 24-5. 28.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, xxi, 1203.

Conclusion

In 1815 the high-Church *British Critic* offered a favourable judgement on church reform during the Napoleonic Wars:

However various have been the attacks to which the Church of England has been of late exposed ... one good effect at least has resulted from the very dangers with which she has been threatened, that a host of her faithful sons among the Laity as well as the Clergy, have rallied under her banners and present a phalanx of defenders, which would have done honour even to her best ages.²²⁵

This opinion was echoed by John Hobhouse, opposing church building in 1824, who claimed that ‘He was persuaded that the religious feeling of the people of England had materially increased since the beginning of the French revolutionary war’.²²⁶ Church reform measures did matter for three reasons. First, they brought about tangible improvements on the ground. Take the Parliamentary grants to Ireland. By 1816 over two-hundred new churches had been built and glebe house numbers rose from 418 in 1807 to 765 by 1819. Three dioceses saw a fivefold increase in glebe houses. Consequently, clerical residency rose from 46.4% in 1806 to 65.2% by 1819; numbers doubling or trebling in six dioceses.²²⁷ Secondly, the measures introduced presaged subsequent efforts. Perceval’s curates bill was finally enacted in 1813 thanks to Harrowby’s persistence. Huntingford’s call for a million pounds for new churches was

²²⁵ *British Critic*, 2nd Series, 3 (1815), p. 645.

²²⁶ *PD*, 2nd Series, 1824, xi, 334.

²²⁷ Brown, *National Churches*, pp. 65-6; Yates, *Religious Condition*, p. 35.

realised in 1818, with another £500,000 spent in 1824. The ‘Second Reformation’ in Ireland quickened in pace in the 1820s, though it ultimately failed. This emphasises a point later chapters will also stress, namely that policies pursued post-1815 had their gestation during the war. Thirdly, church reform was a significant policy during the war years. Perceval was committed, alongside several Pittites, to strengthening the established Churches, thereby quelling nonconformity and Catholicism. This entailed expending considerable time, money, and administrative and legislative effort, which testifies to how important the established Churches were to Perceval and the Pittites.

Chapter 3: Perceval and Religious Dissent

Introduction

In 1840 John Wilson Croker contacted John Perceval for information about his father's life, probably for a *Quarterly Review* article. John Perceval could only give limited information. But he did recollect his father's writing on the book of Daniel and championing of prophecy. Closing the letter, he opined: 'I have no doubt that his steadfast resistance to the Roman Catholic claims was very much owing to his mind being imbued with views of the Papacy obtained from the study of prophecy.'¹ This chapter contends that this religious element is important to understanding Perceval's hostility to Catholic claims. Perceval's prophetic studies and staunch Anglicanism motivated his vehement opposition. This chapter argues that Perceval differed from other Pittites. His religious beliefs underpinned his anti-Catholicism. Unlike Pitt himself, and other 'liberal' Pittites, Perceval was for example unrelentingly hostile to the Maynooth grant, seeing it as funding idolatry; in the same vein his resistance to tithe reform went further than other anti-Catholics, such as Lord Redesdale or Arthur Wellesley. Focusing on Perceval allows us to consider how the 'Anglican Prime Minister' established in the previous chapter interacted with non-Anglicans. If church reform represents one side of the coin, attitudes towards non-Anglicans – Roman Catholics, Protestant nonconformists, and the Church of Scotland – represent the other side. Perceval's tellingly lukewarm attitude towards the Church of Scotland is illuminated. The last section emphasises Perceval's resistance to nonconformist claims, which contrasted with Wilberforce's friendliness towards Dissenters, and explains how anti-Catholic considerations caused Perceval to acquiesce in concessions to Dissenters in 1811-12.

¹ *The Croker Papers*, ed. L. Jennings (2 vols., London, 1884), ii, p. 341.

The spectacular events which provoked the enactment of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 have inevitably preoccupied historians. Events before 1812 have been treated as a mere prequel, speedily described.² Catholic Emancipation was part of the termination of the Anglican constitutional settlement established in 1688-9, foreshadowing the Reform Act of 1832 and the dismantling of the Anglican legal hegemony throughout the Victorian period. It also represented a triumph for Irish Catholic political agitation, presaging similar campaigns, against the Union, for land reform, and for Home Rule. Irish Catholics, fettered by penal laws for four reigns after the Treaty of Limerick in 1691, had previously won a series of concessions from the Irish Parliament. To secure the Union Pitt held out the olive branch of Catholic Emancipation alongside tithe reform and provision for Roman Catholic clergy. George III then refused to countenance emancipation, thereby instigating Pitt's resignation. Without Catholic Emancipation the Union was rendered, in Byron's words, 'the union of the shark with its prey'.³ Paradoxically, Irishmen were fighting for Wellington against Napoleonic forces, whilst the government maintained troops in Ireland to guard against domestic revolt, to stifle agrarian violence, and to prevent French invasion. Only the Royal Navy blockading French ports stopped Ireland becoming a British carbuncle to match Napoleon's Iberian ulcer. Daniel O'Connell increasingly dominated the popular campaign for emancipation in Ireland, but British public opinion, as Perceval cited in his support, was

² W. Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation: A Shake to Men's Minds* (Oxford, 1992); G. Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics 1820 to 1830* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 9-14; J. Wolfe, *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 10-25.

³ D. Kanter, *The Making of British Unionism 1740-1848: Politics, Government and the Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relationship*, (Dublin, 2009), p. 149.

firmly anti-Catholic.⁴ The *Irish Catholic Magazine* angrily declared that this amounted to saying that ‘the Britons are sovereigns, and papists nothing higher than mere Irishmen’.⁵

Historians have traced elements of this campaign – including Irish perspectives;⁶ English Catholic opinions;⁷ the viewpoints of major British periodical journals;⁸ literary contributions;⁹ the pro-emancipation Whigs’ standpoint;¹⁰ the wider unionist context;¹¹ and the varying attitude of clerics.¹² Brian Jenkins and Edward Brynn have studied the Irish administration post-Union, though regrettably Jenkins’ detailed account only begins in 1812.¹³ J.J. Sack has noted that even some pro-Perceval newspapers endorsed emancipation by 1812.¹⁴ The parliamentary opposition to Catholic Emancipation can be loosely divided between those opposed on grounds of expediency, such as Pitt in 1805 and Castlereagh in 1812,¹⁵ and those continuously hostile on grounds of principle. Earlier opposition has been

⁴ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 1239. The electoral headaches it caused Lord Bulkeley and his half-brother Robert Williams in Wales are detailed in M. McCahill, *The House of Lords in the Age of George III* (London, 2009), p. 316.

⁵ ‘Mr Perceval and his Birmingham Kings’, *Irish Catholic Magazine, and Monthly Asylum for Neglected Biography*, 5 (1812), p. 151.

⁶ P. Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 67-97; T. Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690-1830* (Dublin, 1992), pp. 268-304.

⁷ R. Linker, ‘The English Roman Catholics and Emancipation: The Politics of Persuasion’, *JEH*, 127 (1972), pp. 151-80.

⁸ J. O’Neill, ‘The British Quarterlies and the Religious Question, 1802-1829’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 52 (1966), pp. 350-71.

⁹ M. Tomko, *British Romanticism and the Catholic Question: Religion, History and National Identity 1778-1829* (Basingstoke, 2011).

¹⁰ M. Roberts, *The Whig Party 1807-1812* (London, 1939).

¹¹ Kanter, *Making of British Unionism*.

¹² N. Yates, ‘Anglican Attitudes to Roman Catholicism in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’ in S. Brown, F. Knight and J. Morgan-Guy (eds.), *Religion, Identity and Conflict in Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 121-37.

¹³ E. Brynn, *Crown & Castle: British Rule in Ireland 1800-30* (Dublin, 1978); B. Jenkins, *Era of Emancipation: British Government of Ireland 1812-1830* (Kingston, Ontario, 1988).

¹⁴ J.J. Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 230.

¹⁵ *PD*, 1805, iv, 1013-22; 1812, xxi, 635-41, 1004-10.

overshadowed by the Ultra-Tory resistance of 1828-9.¹⁶ Geoffrey Best's 1958 article stressed the secular reasons for condemning Catholic Emancipation – notably the eulogising of the constitution and allegations of Catholic intolerance.¹⁷ But this downplays the religious component to opposition. Perceval provides a good case study through which to examine Emancipation's pre-history.

A divisive political question

Catholic Emancipation represented a divisive legacy for the Pittites. The next three sections contextualise this Pittite division and explain why Perceval opposed emancipation. His constitutional objections to emancipation, grounded in supporting the established Church, echoed other Pittite opponents, include Eldon. His religious objections make him unusual. Yet Pitt's legacy also served those Pittites who sympathised with emancipation. To understand Perceval's position, we need to contextualise his views within wider Pittite opinion. Pitt resigned over Catholic Emancipation in 1801, but subsequently abandoned his support; a position still held by Lord Castlereagh in 1812. Canning initially acquiesced in this opposition, but was displeased at Perceval's hard-line approach in 1808, foreshadowing Canning's renewed support for emancipation in 1812.

Pitt publicly abandoned his support for Catholic Emancipation in 1805, alongside Lord Castlereagh, the chief secretary to Ireland and therefore crucial to enacting the Union. Their opinions changed principally because of George III's implacable hostility to concessions. The same reasoning underpinned Pittite opposition in 1807 to the Talents' plan

¹⁶ R. Gaunt, 'The Fourth Duke of Newcastle, the Ultra-Tories and the Opposition to Canning's Administration', *History*, 88 (2003), pp. 568-85.

¹⁷ G. Best, 'The Protestant Constitution and its Supporters, 1800-1829', *TRHS*, 8 (1958), pp. 105-27.

to let Catholics serve in the highest ranks of the armed forces. Aligning with George's views was partly motivated by personal considerations. The 1801 crisis had preceded a brief renewal of the king's 'madness', which may have contributed to Pitt abandoning his pledge to Irish Catholics to insist upon emancipation as a price of returning to office.¹⁸ As Perceval noted in 1809, merely discussing the subject perturbed the ailing monarch.¹⁹ Consequently Perceval expressed to Sidmouth his determination 'to uphold the Govt which would not harass the King's Conscience & the public peace by continuing & encouraging this measure'.²⁰

Positions on Catholic Emancipation also shifted due to political calculation. The Union was passed through mobilising divergent interest groups, both for and against Catholic Emancipation. Thus the staunchly anti-emancipation Lord Clare complained of 'deception' over how he had been persuaded to support the Union.²¹ Not only Pitt,²² but Perceval and other vigorous anti-Catholics such as Irish MP and Protestant convert Patrick Duigenan, were persuaded to hint that further concessions would follow post-Union.²³ Perceval's actions do speak louder than his drafted speech. He immediately joined the anti-emancipation government of Henry Addington. The divergent opinions held by the Pittites immediately following the Union foreshadows their later disunity. Perceval, alongside Eldon and Hawkesbury (later Liverpool), were steadfastly opposed to concessions. Castlereagh moved

¹⁸ *Castlereagh*, iv, pp. 72-3, 76.

¹⁹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, II.16: Perceval to Liverpool, 19 Sep. 1809.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Va.1: Perceval to Sidmouth, 7 Oct. 1809 (draft).

²¹ *Castlereagh*, iv, p. 47.

²² W. Pitt, *Speech of the Right Honourable William Pitt, in the House of Commons, Thursday, January 31, 1799, on Offering to the House the Resolutions which He Proposed as the Basis of an Union between Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1799), pp. 38-41.

²³ S. Douglas, *Speech of the Right Honourable Sylvester Douglas in the House of Commons, Tuesday, April the 23d 1799, on Seconding the Motion of the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the House to Agree with the Lords in an Address to His Majesty, relative to a Union with Ireland* (Dublin, 1799), p. 99; BL, Add MS 49180, fo. 7: draft of speech on Union with Ireland. Interestingly neither of Perceval's published speeches on the Union contain this hint at concession: *PR(1)*, viii, pp. 32-6; *PH*, xxxiv, 406-9.

to opposition on the grounds of expediency, thinking that emancipation would have been desirable, but recognising royal and Protestant concerns, and desiring securities for Protestantism.²⁴ Canning and Marquis Wellesley echoed this position during George III's reign; but during the Regency they supported emancipation. Whilst George III retained his capacities it made political sense to acquiesce in his prejudices, especially once the Talents' dismissal had demonstrated how far George would go in opposing Catholic Emancipation. A converse desire to appear even-handed, whilst simultaneously preserving the status quo, led the Prince Regent in 1812 to delay Sidmouth's return to government until after the Catholic question had been debated. Otherwise, it 'would convey an injurious impression of the Prince's opinion & determination upon it if Ld. S was to be in at that time'.²⁵ Although the Regent preferred, and after 1812 accomplished, making Catholic relief an open question within the Cabinet, by keeping Perceval in power he *de facto* agreed to an anti-Catholic ministry, a position only overturned by Perceval's assassination.²⁶

Even before Canning renewed his support for Catholic Emancipation, he and Perceval had differed in their tone and attitude to Catholics. Canning demonstrated this in a revealing and hitherto neglected letter of 1808. He was unhappy at Perceval's willingness to aggravate hostilities towards Catholics, notably over their exclusion from being Bank of Ireland directors, an issue which had been highlighted by the institution's re-chartering. Canning complained: 'we are going step by step far away from what I understood to be our understood system'. He regretted having acquiesced in limiting the Maynooth grant, having been motivated by wanting to avoid 'personal embarrassment' for Perceval. But the government was now pursuing or proposing four anti-Catholic policies: discouraging their ecclesiastical

²⁴ PRONI, T3076/2/55: Lord Castlereagh to Lord Hertford, 27 June 1811.

²⁵ Holland (Perceval) Papers, X.8: Perceval to Lord Lonsdale, 30 Mar. 1812.

²⁶ Duke of Buckingham, *Memoirs of the Court of England during the Regency 1811-1820* (2 vols., London, 1856), i, pp. 251-2.

establishments; sympathising with equivalent nonconformist establishments; ‘Perpetuating existing restrictions against Catholicks [sic]’; and rewarding men, such as Patrick Duigenan, ‘eminent for their animosity against’ Catholics. This was partly a disagreement about tactics. But it also indicates a difference between those permanently opposed to Catholic relief and those who merely thought the time inopportune. To Canning the measures undertaken smacked of making ‘us the assailants and the stirrers of the discussion’.²⁷ He wanted to avoid the resulting debate, whereas Perceval was untroubled by it. Perceval’s view prevailed throughout the course of the Portland and Perceval governments. When the re-charter was debated on the 30 May 1808 Perceval defeated Sir John Newport’s amendment to let Catholics to serve as directors.²⁸ Duigenan remained a Privy Councillor, with ministers obdurately refusing to reply to several speeches denouncing what Tierney termed ‘a pure, wanton, and gratuitous insult to the feelings of the Catholics of Ireland’.²⁹ By 1812 Canning, now out of office, countenanced Catholic Emancipation. He reputedly penned an article in *The Times* justifying replacing Perceval with Marquis Wellesley (supported by Canning),³⁰ because Perceval’s ‘avowed hostility to the Irish Catholic has more of religion than of political feeling for its source’. This meant that ‘he will expose the state to any degree of commotion, and be consequently and deservedly driven from office’. Grey and Grenville’s foreign policy was feeble, so Wellesley was needed.³¹ The subject also aggravated the growing disharmony between Perceval and Wellesley in 1812, as the latter tried to eject Perceval from power and enjoy the influence he had expected when joining the Cabinet in 1809. Wellesley purportedly commented ‘that in Mr Perceval’s view of the question Catholic

²⁷ BL, Add MS81943/1/120: Canning to Perceval, 4 May 1808.

²⁸ *PD*, 1808, xi, 714-17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

³⁰ *Plumer Ward*, i, p. 461.

³¹ *The Times* (12 Mar. 1812), p. 3.

restrictions were a positive good and in his view they were the greatest of evils'.³² These manoeuvres failed and Wellesley resigned in late January 1812. Horner also attested to Perceval's distinctiveness from other Pittites. His undeviating opposition to Catholic Emancipation was respected for its integrity by the Whigs, who had 'in common infinite contempt for the temporarizing [*sic*] conduct of Castlereagh and Canning, who have no ambition for any thing higher than office'.³³ Cynically, we might attribute Castlereagh's opposition to Catholic claims as the price of holding office; whereas Canning and Wellesley recognised the need to court the Grenville-Grey opposition through adhering to their pro-Catholic standpoint.

By 1812 the Pittites' position on Catholic Emancipation had fragmented. Canning and Wellesley's support represented a breakdown in the uneasy anti-Catholic consensus of 1807. Charles Grant MP wrote in February 1812 that 'The Catholic question is one which has divided all parties.'³⁴ However, as Canning's letter to Perceval in 1808 revealed, there had always been stark differences between reluctant and principled opponents of Catholic claims. Expediency by 1812 made Canning support and Castlereagh oppose emancipation. Therefore, this section has shown how divided the Pittites were on the issue, and indicated how Perceval, with his principled opposition founded on constitutional and religious reasons, we shall now turn to why Perceval differed markedly from other high-profile Pittites.

Opposing Emancipation

Pittites tended to oppose emancipation for three overarching arguments. First, they opposed the measure for reasons of political expediency – the time was not right and it was politically

³² *HMC Fortescue*, x, p. 192.

³³ *Horner Papers*, p. 720.

³⁴ NRS, GD23/6/746/6: Charles to James Grant, 3 Mar. 1812.

imprudent to support emancipation given George III's firm opposition. This position encompassed virtually all members of the Portland ministry, and remained Castlereagh's opinion in 1812. Secondly, Perceval differed from other Pittites by having strong theological reasons for opposing Catholic claims. Despite Perceval's pious reputation, previous scholars have downplayed this connection. Yet he believed that the providentially-driven French Revolution made Catholic Emancipation too dangerous to pursue; and his prophetic studies caused him to view the Pope as the Anti-Christ. This presaged his resistance to funding Catholic priests and seminaries because they constituted idolatry. Thirdly, we see Perceval's transcendent Anglicanism, evidenced by his constitutional objections to emancipation as imperilling the established Church, the Protestant Ascendancy, and the Anglo-Irish Union. Perceval's public pronouncements tended to reflect the similar constitutional arguments of fellow anti-Catholic Pittites such as Liverpool, Eldon, and Redesdale.

Political expediency explains one type of the arguments used against Catholic Emancipation, namely those based on the details of the proposal. The vagueness of the motion; the 'present state of the country', or the refusal of Catholic bishops or lay Irish Catholics to support the veto from 1808 meaning that the established Church would lack sufficient securities, all provided grounds to oppose emancipation.³⁵ The veto controversy furnished Perceval with an opportunity to highlight the divisions within the pro-emancipation camp, something he eagerly exploited in a pamphlet.³⁶ These pragmatic arguments were used both by temporary opponents, such as Castlereagh, and by permanent opponents seeking to persuade waverers.

For Perceval, opposing concessions was a useful political weapon. Parliamentary and electoral success was achieved in 1807 on the cry of 'No Popery'. Perceval's election address

³⁵ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 636-8, 1024; xxii, 628.

³⁶ A.B [S. Perceval], *Six Letters on the Subject of Dr. Milner's Explanation*, (London, 1809).

at Northampton was so inflammatory that Lord Erskine joked that ‘he lamented that poor Lord George [Gordon] had not lived in these times when he would have stood a chance of being in the Cabinet, instead of being in Newgate’.³⁷ Another contemporary claimed that Northampton Corporation was consequently ‘as warm in their zeal against popery in the days of George III as their forefathers had been in the reign of Elizabeth’.³⁸ When Lord Howick criticised Perceval’s election address, he responded by asserting the truthfulness of his ‘Church in Danger’ cry, which explained why it had spread across the country.³⁹ He unsuccessfully tried to include a reference to the Catholic question in the King’s speech for the new Parliament.⁴⁰ Canning’s letter of 1808 highlights how Perceval still thought that political capital could be gained from an anti-Catholic stance. In 1812, opposing Catholic Emancipation was still thought politically effective. Perceval’s opponents feared that he would dissolve Parliament and reinforce his flagging majority through raising a ‘No Popery’ cry.⁴¹ The idea of popular hostility to Catholic Emancipation was shared by Colonel James Willoughby Gordon, former secretary to the Duke of York and Quartermaster-General to the Forces, when discussing how the Regent should act. Gordon acknowledged that the measure was popular in Ireland, but ‘as an English question the Catholick [*sic*] Petition is decidedly unpopular’.⁴²

The second type of category of anti-emancipation argument was religiously grounded, resisting Catholics because of their beliefs. For anti-emancipationists, their professions of

³⁷ BL, Add MS 49189, fo. 10: Memoirs of Spencer Perceval; S. Romilly, *The Memoirs of Sir Samuel Romilly* (3 vols., London, 1840), ii, p. 199.

³⁸ A. Stephens, *Public Characters of 1809-10* (London, 1809), p. 483.

³⁹ PD, 1807 ix, 340, 634. For the role of ‘No Popery’ at the election see M. Hinton, ‘The General Elections of 1806 and 1807’ (Reading Univ. PhD thesis, 1959), pp. 329-44, 352-7.

⁴⁰ BL, Add MS 49181, fo. 44: draft of King’s speech, before 26 June 1807.

⁴¹ HMC Fortescue, x, p. 230; *Horner Papers*, p. 725.

⁴² CPW, viii, p. 222.

religious toleration meant that relying on theological arguments was publicly problematic and unlikely to sway undecided parliamentarians. Therefore, Perceval differed markedly from other Pittites in having strong religious motives for opposing Catholic Emancipation. These were confided privately and occasionally expressed publicly. Although Perceval's religiosity makes this connection in one sense unsurprising, it is striking that previous scholars, notably Gray, have failed to directly connect Perceval's interest in prophecy and Providence with his anti-Catholicism.⁴³

Perceval's views on Catholicism were articulated in 1800, when he supported the Monastic Institutions Bill, which restrained institutions established by French émigrés. Perceval opined that: 'He considered it as the spirit of the Catholic persuasion to make as many converts as possible – indeed it was the principle of every religion to a given extent, but emphatically so of the Catholic'. Without blaming Catholics, Perceval believed that 'it was our business to be on our guard against such a spirit, since it was inconsistent with the spirit of our Constitution ... He should not wish a hair of a man's head hurt on account of his religious opinions; but that did not compel him to think that Catholics are the best subjects to this country'.⁴⁴ Subsequently Perceval's public pronouncements slyly condemned Catholic doctrines, without making this his chief argument. Catholics' faith did make them inferior subjects:

It was not upon the ground that the Catholics of Ireland were more rebellious subjects than any other that he would resist the motion, but upon the ground that the church establishment should be maintained in the whole kingdom, and not be endangered in any part of it ... He thought that the more any great sects were

⁴³ D. Gray, *Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister* (Manchester, 1963), pp. 19-21, 45-6.

⁴⁴ *PR(1)*, xii, 171-2.

brought to an equality of rights and honours, the nearer they were to a struggle.

They ought to have subordination, to have peace.⁴⁵

Similarly, his last speech on Catholic Emancipation in 1812 included an extended passage where he reminded his audience of Catholic beliefs:

I have never, upon any occasion, founded any part of my opposition or resistance, to any measure proposed for the relief of the Roman Catholics, with reference to any one of their religious doctrines. This I never have done. I have always taken it up upon quite different ground: but I must say, that if they have renounced all their obnoxious doctrines, and all their tenets to which so much objection is made in this country, they do not, in my humble opinion, act very wisely, or very prudently, in respect thereof. We see the bishops in Ireland repeatedly holding synods. Why do they not, in some synodal meeting, publicly renounce all those doctrines that are offensive in the apprehensions of many persons? We are told they consulted the most celebrated of their universities. Sir, I must confess I see very little in these communications. What do they establish? Little or nothing. I will ask why do not the Roman Catholic bishops, instead of consulting the universities of France and other countries, where the persons concerned in them are entirely directed by French influence – why do they not, I say, go to the fountain head at once? Why do they not go to the Pope himself, and get from him a recognition of abjuration from all those offensive doctrines? But I say, that for one, before you go a single step farther at the present moment, you should be given to understand, that the Roman Catholics are not bound by these general

⁴⁵ *PD*, 1811, xx, 419.

councils which have been quoted by my right hon. and learned friend behind me, (Dr. Duigenan).⁴⁶

Privately Perceval was more forthright. In his anonymous pamphlet on the Book of Daniel, published in 1800, the French were centre-stage. Their power was the ‘King of the North’ whose defeat was foretold. Yet integral to Perceval’s interpretation being accurate was identifying the ruler defeated by France as the Pope. Isaac Newton had suggested that the 36th to the 39th verses referred to the Eastern Roman Empire. Perceval conversely contended:

All the various characteristics which are given of him in the Prophecy, are by them applied to various superstitious, idolatrous, and blasphemous practises, which have prevailed in the *Romish Church*, to the full as much as in the *Eastern Empire* ... The only question, therefore, between their interpretation and that suggested here, supposing the description cannot be applied with propriety to both, is, whether this King, so described, means the *Eastern Empire*, a power which was great, and established antecedent to, and independent of these superstitions, or the *Pope*, whose authority and power were, in great measure, founded upon them, and can hardly be supported.

He also described the Papal territories as ‘the seat of the Beast’ in the Book of Revelation.⁴⁷

Perceval articulated similar views to Wilberforce on 15 April 1805. Fox was bringing forward a new Catholic petition, the first since the Union. Perceval’s memorandum strove to refute the pro-emancipation arguments. He denied that there was a natural right for Catholics

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1812, xxii, 982, 970.

⁴⁷ [S. Perceval], *Observations, intended to point out the application of a prophecy in the eleventh chapter of Daniel, to the French power* (London, 1800), pp. 2, 44.

to be ministers and legislators. These were ‘mere creatures of the Law, & of the State, having no natural existence of their own’. Perceval worried that emancipation would increase Popery, and feared the consequence of Parliament appearing indifferent about religion. He added:

I will add another argument which weighs strongly with me, tho’ I don’t know that it will with you – & at all Events I think it would not be a proper parliamentary topic – but you should be acquainted with it – because if you differ from me upon it, you may hopefully consider it as a prejudice in my mind to which must of my strong opinion against any measure of this kind maybe ascribed ... Mede⁴⁸ says somewhere that when God’s judgements are upon earth, they usually have some mark upon them which ascertains their aim – and it seems to me that the principal aim of the judgements which in such horrendous visitations have been upon earth since the era of the French Revolution; has been the overthrow of Papal Superstition – observe the countries where the war has principally raged – and consider whether they are not so generally R. Catholics as to give great countenance to the ideas – what are they – France – Italy – Austria, the Netherlands, the ecclesiastical states ... observe that in all of these the papist institutions of convents &c &c – have almost wholly laid down – & the Pope’s own independence at least is at an end ... In our own country – Ireland the most R Catholic has suffered the most.

⁴⁸ Probably Joseph Mede, the Stuart biblical scholar and millenarian

Perceval acknowledged the apparent contradiction with his ‘dread of the increase of Popery’ but argued that the death throes of Papal power, once ‘the mask of religion has been so torn from the Pope’s face’, should be dreaded:

This therefore seems to open a probability at least to a great encrease of Popery tho’ I confess only for a time; I am myself so fully impressed with a belief of the Protestant application of the Prophecies that I think the Pope has received his death Blow – but I think he will have, a dying plunge & struggle yet, and I wish we may be out of the reach of his convulsive stroke which may be given in that struggle.⁴⁹

Dudley Perceval, when printing Perceval’s speech of 1805, was mindful of changing attitudes to biblical prophecy. The above passage was therefore consigned to an unimportant footnote, though Perceval’s claims about Catholicism encouraging ‘infidelity’, with God making ‘the Atheist his instrument in putting down those abominations’, were included.⁵⁰ John Perceval’s view that his father was influenced by his prophetic studies are reinforced by Perceval’s letter to a Mr Bosanquet. Perceval accepted that the exact relationship of the Pope to the eight heads of the Beast in the Book of Revelation was unclear, but reassured Bosanquet: ‘You must not understand me as getting the Pope, or his Roman Catholic Idolatrous tenets out of the threatenings of Revelation, because no doubt that power now presiding at Rome, is the woman who rides upon the beast, who is drunk with the blood of the Saints, the Mother of Harlots &c &c’. Perceval then reiterated his views about ‘French power & opinions’ having ‘been raised up by Providence for the overthrow of the Popish

⁴⁹ BL, Add MS 49812, fo. 3: Perceval to Wilberforce, memorandum on the Catholic question, 15 Apr. 1805.

⁵⁰ D. Perceval, *The Church Question in Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 15, 19.

Superstitions', the French having invariably overrun Catholic nations. He proceeded to mix contemporary political commentary with biblical prophecy:

I think there are grounds in prophecy to apprehend that Popery will revive for a short time, there seems be sufficient reason to think that the witnesses have been yet killed, and their dead bodies exposed in the street of the Great City, for any part of the 3 days & ½ and if not this should seem to foretel [*sic*] another persecution, and that a popish one – but all Conjectures for the future are most hazardous.⁵¹

This view was not unique. Early 1805 saw epistolary discussions over Mede's ideas in the *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine*. This inspired Perceval to draft letters justifying and promoting prophetic studies. Its lesser virtues included 'giving a new zeal to the Study of History, and a peculiar interest to the observation of the great events which are passing in the world'.⁵² In 1812 his fellow abolitionist and millenarian Granville Sharp sent him 'a small Tract on the long continued vain & wicked pretence of the Papal power to extinguish, with the most cruel and bloody persecutions, the true Primitive Catholic Church of Christ!'⁵³ The idea of the Pope as the anti-Christ was already firmly established, and Bishop Horsley was criticised in 1801 for denying this connection. High-Churchmen George Faber and Robert Nares printed works linking the Papacy to the Anti-Christ in 1799 and 1804 respectively. Contrastingly, Horsley viewed France as the Anti-Christ, an interpretation which other writers (including Faber) subsequently adopted, sometimes focusing on Napoleon.⁵⁴ This has

⁵¹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXVII.134: Perceval to Bosanquet, nd.

⁵² BL, Add MS 88914/26, fo. 5: Perceval's letters on prophecy.

⁵³ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXVII.105: Granville Sharp to Perceval, 17 Feb. 1812.

⁵⁴ A. Robinson, 'Identifying the Beast: Samuel Horsley and the Problem of Papal AntiChrist', *JEH*, 43 (1992), pp. 592-607; S. Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (London, 2004), pp. 84-7.

twofold importance. First, both Gray and Hilton cited Perceval's interest in biblical prophecy to emphasise his evangelicalism.⁵⁵ But high-Churchmen such as Nares, Horsley, and Perceval's correspondent Edward Pearson, also valued the practice. Secondly, Perceval was unusual, not in believing the Pope was an Anti-Christ figure, but in being a politician guided by those ideas to resist Catholic Emancipation. Previous biographers have not connected his beliefs with his anti-Catholicism. But among the senior Pittites opposing emancipation Perceval was rare in having strong theological reasons for his opposition.

A third strand of anti-emancipation arguments were constitutional objections, which formed permanent obstacles to concessions. Their proponents included Lords Redesdale and Eldon, who argued that Irish agitators would only be placated by a Catholic establishment and an independent Ireland. Upholding the constitution in church and state required absolute resistance. This was Perceval's public reason for opposing emancipation and shows his commitment to upholding the established Church. He became publicly associated with it, causing Wellington to subsequently write: 'I agree with poor Mr. Perceval that there is no argument in favour of farther concession which does not go the full length of granting the benefices of the Church.'⁵⁶ One approach was to stress the religious intolerance of Catholics and the alleged power that emancipation would give the Pope. The Bishop of Lichfield professed to be defending the 1688 settlement, both in terms of respecting religious toleration and preserving Anglican privileges.⁵⁷ Redesdale pithily argued that he was resisting the 'usurpation of temporal power by spiritual persons'. Aside from probably violating the King's coronation oath, Catholic Emancipation was unwise because 'It is impossible to divest

⁵⁵ Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, p. 18.; B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1988), p. 219.

⁵⁶ *Wellington*, vii, p. 353.

⁵⁷ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime* 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2000), p. 425.

a religious sect of the character of a political party'. Catholics would always seek to overthrow the Protestant established Church.⁵⁸ Liverpool too cited Catholics' allegiance to a foreign potentate.⁵⁹ In 1809 Perceval pointed to the 'enslaved dependence of the Pope to our inveterate enemy' as grounds for making opposition to Catholic claims 'almost indispensable in a member of the administration'.⁶⁰ In 1812 he claimed of the alleged Papal influence, that 'upon that point the whole question turns'.⁶¹ Alongside this were professions of toleration and condemnation of the 'bloody and cruel code' of the old penal laws. However, Perceval atypically wanted to use the elective franchise, granted to Irish Catholics in 1793, as a bargaining chip to deter further Catholic agitation lest it be removed.⁶² Thus we see that even among strong anti-Catholics Perceval went further than most in his opposition.

Another significant argument was the claim that Catholic Emancipation was only the beginning. Starting down the slippery slope of granting concessions would destroy the Union and the Protestant Ascendancy in church and state. Redesdale especially was a devotee of this argument.⁶³ Perceval concurred, having already in 1797 opposed parliamentary reform because one likely outcome was Catholic Emancipation.⁶⁴ He now opposed any concessions to Catholics, because of what would follow. Thus in 1807 Perceval contended that granting military positions to Catholics constituted 'one of the most important and most dangerous measures ever submitted to the judgment of the legislature'.⁶⁵ Having obtained entry into Parliament, Catholics would move to abolish tithes and establish ecclesiastical parity. However, Catholic agitation would only be satiated by a Roman Catholic established church,

⁵⁸ *PD*, 1812, xxii, 599-600.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 631.

⁶⁰ CUL, MS Add 8713/XVI/C/12: Perceval to Fitzgerald, 18 Nov. 1809.

⁶¹ *PD*, 1812, xii, 965.

⁶² *PD*, 1805, iv, 1039; BL, Add MS 49182, fo. 8: Perceval to Wilberforce, memorandum on the Catholic Question, 15 Apr. 1805.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1805, iv, 1061.

⁶⁴ BL, Add MS 49179, fo. 87: notes for debate on parliamentary reform, 1797.

⁶⁵ *PD*, 1807, ix, 8.

presaging the fall of the Protestant Ascendancy and the Union. Perceval consistently voiced this argument,⁶⁶ describing it as ‘the sum and substance of my Creed upon this subject’.⁶⁷ This opinion has been reiterated by his biographers,⁶⁸ alongside historians of anti-Catholicism such as Best and Clark, who have emphasised these constitutional arguments and their connection with national identity amongst anti-Catholic politicians.⁶⁹ Perceval’s employment of these arguments confirms the importance to him of upholding the established Church. We have seen that he favoured converting the Irish to Anglicanism through church reform. This conversion solution to Irish problems was not universally shared. Wellington thought sectarianism necessary to entrench the Union, for ‘Abolish the distinction and all will be Irishmen alike, with similar Irish feelings. Show me an Irishman and I’ll show you a man whose anxious wish it is to see his country independent of Great Britain’.⁷⁰ Perceval’s Irish church reforms sought to address Lord Redesdale’s complaint that ‘*No pains have been taken to make the peasantry Protestants*’. Until this was corrected, Redesdale contended that Ireland ‘must be kept for some time as a garrisoned country. I meant a Protestant garrison.’⁷¹ Perceval’s ministry subsequently acted to make this a reality. They implemented an Anglo-Irish militia interchange, which resulted in Protestant, British militiamen being stationed in Ireland, with Irish Catholics transferring to Britain.⁷² This section has therefore sustained the notion of Perceval’s transcendent Anglicanism. Grounding his public objections on defending

⁶⁶ *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce* eds. R. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce (2 vols., London, 1840), ii, pp. 15-17; *PD*, 1808, xi, 623; 1812, xxii, 977.

⁶⁷ NLI, MS 72 fo. 1910: Perceval to Wellesley Pole, 9 Mar. 1812.

⁶⁸ S. Walpole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval* (2 vols., London, 1874), i, pp. 143-4, 153-5, ii, pp. 244-57, 324-6; Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, pp. 19-22.

⁶⁹ Best, ‘The Protestant Constitution’, pp. 105-27; Clark, *English Society*, p. 440.

⁷⁰ *Wellington*, vii, p. 353.

⁷¹ *Colchester*, i, pp. 408-9.

⁷² PRONI, T3228/6/41: Perceval to Richard Ryder, 31 May 1811; T3228/5/75: Ryder to Wellesley Pole, 31 July 1811; V. Fontana, ‘The Political and Religious Significance of the British/Irish Militias Interchange, 1811-1816’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 84 (2006), pp. 131-57.

the constitution reflected the views of other anti-Pittites, including fellow church reformers such as Redesdale. Ireland's Catholics should be converted rather than appeased, and placating their demands merely jeopardised the established Church. However, as we shall see, Perceval's opposition went further, and distinguished him from other Pittites. His resistance had theological foundations that complemented his constitutional and political concerns.

Catholic Emancipation was exhaustively debated, divided the Pittites, and helped determine who governed during the latter part of the Napoleonic Wars. Perceval particularly appreciated how effective a political weapon it could be. Opposition to emancipation defined the Portland and Perceval ministries. Yet within those administrations the reasons for resisting Catholic claims varied, partly because of differing views of the subject at the Act of Union. This pattern is equally discernible on interrelated Catholic questions.

Maynooth, and paying Catholic clergy

Perceval's distinct position among senior Pittites is further highlighted by his reasons for criticising the Maynooth grant and the possible payment of Catholic clergy. Both ideas originated with Pitt's government. The latter even reputedly enjoyed George III's sympathy. As with Catholic Emancipation the Pittites grappled with Pitt's legacy. This section begins by highlighting Pittite sympathy for the Maynooth grant and for the payment of Catholic priests, which were more widespread than approval of Catholic Emancipation, even being contemplated after 1801. It then explains Perceval's two grounds for opposition. One, was his opposition to financing idolatry, which highlights the unusual significance of theological considerations for Perceval compared with other Pittites. The other ground was Perceval's

view that funding Catholics undermined the church reform efforts to bolster the Church of Ireland, thereby testifying to the importance he attached to supporting the established Church.

The Maynooth seminary was founded in 1795 to train Roman Catholic priests, with a grant proposed by Pitt and passed by the Irish Parliament. Advocates of the Anglo-Irish Union then proposed complementing this grant with provision for Catholic priests. Even the Earl of Clare did not express vehement opposition.⁷³ Pitt hinted at implementing this measure.⁷⁴ After the Union the issue persisted. Although George III had declared himself surprised at hearing of the original proposal in 1799,⁷⁵ subsequently it was believed he was not opposed.⁷⁶ Irish Whig noblemen such as the Duke of Leinster, former Pitt ministers Lords Grenville and Buckingham, and allegedly Wilberforce, were persuaded of its merits.⁷⁷ In 1804 Perceval expressed his worry that Pitt's ministry was contemplating funding Roman Catholic priests, declaring his 'most determined opposition'.⁷⁸ The next clash came not on paying for Roman Catholic priests but for increasing the Maynooth grant. In 1807 the Talents proposed raising the grant from £8,000 to £13,000. This measure was to be forcefully opposed by the Pittites, eagerly by Perceval, cautiously by Canning. The annual Maynooth grant debates gave an opportunity, in 1808, 1811 and 1812, to opposition MPs to propose restoring the Talents' grant of £13,000.⁷⁹ Paying Catholic priests also enjoyed some Pittite support, notably from the Lord Lieutenant of 1807-12, the Duke of Richmond.⁸⁰ Canning, whilst acquiescing in a reduced Maynooth grant, was unhappy with the arguments advanced

⁷³ *Castlereagh*, i, pp. 379-80, 393-4.

⁷⁴ Pitt, *Speech January 31 1799*, p. 41.

⁷⁵ PRONI, T3319/63: George III to Pitt, 24 Jan. 1799.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, T3030/6/3: Lord Eldon to Redesdale, 31 Aug. 1802.

⁷⁷ BL, Add MS 49188, fo. 117, 119: Redesdale to Perceval, 23 Oct. 1803; H. Twiss, *The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon: with Selections from His Correspondence* 2nd edn (3 vols., London, 1844), i, p. 433.

⁷⁸ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XI.6: Perceval to Redesdale, 28 Aug. 1804, XI.6a: Perceval to Redesdale, 1 Nov. 1804.

⁷⁹ *PD*, 1808, xi, 120-1; 1811, xix, 512-4, 516-7, 518-23; 1812, xxi, 1226-34.

⁸⁰ *Wellington*, v, p. 448.

in 1808, which struck at the principle of an institution founded by Pitt, and suggested bartering a higher grant for greater government control.⁸¹

Perceval was not alone among the Pittites in opposing grants to Catholic clergy. The same group who resisted emancipation on constitutional grounds voiced similar concerns against Maynooth and paying Catholic clergy. Redesdale blamed Burke for establishing the Maynooth grant,⁸² and claimed that funding Catholic clergy ‘will raise new Becketts’ with the support of law against the government, asserting independence from the state.⁸³ Eldon considered it tantamount to establishing Roman Catholicism and worse than Catholic Emancipation.⁸⁴ Charles Abbot, upon becoming Chief Secretary to Ireland, was told to evade the question. Privately he also opposed the scheme, objecting to each proposed mode of paying for it and preferring to strengthen the established Church. This would reduce the ‘weight and strength of the Roman Catholics to a state which would relieve the Government in time to come, from all anxiety for the public safety.’⁸⁵ Thus critics thought that supporting Catholic priests, and funding Maynooth, hindered the established Church.

As with Catholic Emancipation, Perceval privately expressed a theological objection to funding Catholic priests – that it was funding idolatry. Again, this religious bent distinguished him from other anti-Catholic Pittites. Perceval’s views were confided to Wilberforce, who in 1808 acknowledged that ‘When he recollected the history of the past times, it was impossible for him not to be jealous of the Roman-Catholic religion’.⁸⁶ Perceval appreciated the value of Wilberforce’s speeches on the Maynooth question, writing that ‘one word from you will have ten times the weight of anything which can fall from me upon such

⁸¹ *LCGIII*, v, pp. 74-5.

⁸² BL, Add MS 49188, fo. 110: Redesdale to Perceval, 23 Oct. 1803; BL, Add MS 82612, fo. 49: Redesdale to Eldon, 19 July 1802.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Add MS 49188, fo. 119: Redesdale to Perceval, 23 Oct. 1803.

⁸⁴ PRONI, T3030/6/3: Eldon to Redesdale, 31 Aug. 1802.

⁸⁵ *Colchester*, i, p. 356.

⁸⁶ *PD*, 1808, xi, 125.

a subject'.⁸⁷ In 1805, alongside condemning Catholic Emancipation, Perceval also expatiated at length on paying priests. He had already observed warily that no priest or bishop had signed the Catholic petition promising not to interfere with the Church of Ireland's emoluments. He commented that paying priests would be self-defeating, with 'such a Priesthood [considered] as hirelings of an heretical government', and that it risked alienating Protestant Dissenters and Anglicans. But this question went beyond matters of policy – 'the Qu[estion] I am now considering is can we in conscience concur in a measure compelling Protestant Fellow subjects to pay more – It seems to me that this is a Question not only of Policy but of Religion'. Asking for payment for Muslims, or worshippers of 'Jupiter' or 'the Goddess of reason' would be dismissed as favouring 'Blasphemous Idolatry'. Likewise, Perceval concluded:

I believe the R. Cath^c doctrines to be Idolatrous whether they are idolatrous or not Christians differ – but that whatever is idolatrous is offensive to God in the extreme, & marked in his word, as sooner or later to be the object of his worst vengeance no Christian denies so long as we believe we are right and do deem it to be idolatrous can we, as Christians, with a safe conscience compel our subjects to support what we deem idolatry.

As with his opinions on the role of Providence impacting on Catholicism Perceval acknowledged 'I doubt whether it would do as a public topic'.⁸⁸

Perceval also resisted funding Catholics because of the threat it posed to the established Church. In 1810, discussing the idea of funding Catholic clergy, Perceval

⁸⁷ Duke University, Wilberforce Papers: Perceval to Wilberforce, 10 July 1807.

⁸⁸ BL, Add MS 49812, fo. 6: Perceval to Wilberforce, memorandum on the Catholic question, 15 Apr. 1805.

described such funding as compromising Irish church reform. Helping Catholic priests was ‘so much weight flung into the opposite scale, counteracting all good which we may hope to derive on the other side. To this, therefore, I cannot conceive the state of circumstances in which I should not feel myself bound to give my most decided opposition’.⁸⁹ This principled opposition reflected resistance in specific cases. A small example, drawn from a hitherto unused letter at Yale University, aptly demonstrates the point. In 1811 Perceval was approached by Charles Butler, a Catholic lawyer, campaigner and adherent to Cisalpine Catholic notions (which downplayed Papal authority), requesting that the Prince Regent contribute to the building of a Catholic chapel in Chelsea. Communicating the rejection, Perceval noted that there was a lack of funds available, and added: ‘it certainly has not been hitherto the policy of this Country to furnish any public aid for the purpose of providing such means, except for the established church’.⁹⁰ On a larger scale, Perceval was concerned about increasing the Maynooth grant. In 1807 he regretted that it had been established and argued that establishing Maynooth had harmed Trinity College, Dublin, and deterred Catholics from attending that institution. Furthermore, provision was made for training 100 clerics at Trinity compared to 200 at Maynooth.⁹¹ This concurred with Redesdale and Duigenan’s views.⁹² In 1812 Perceval worried that ‘an excess of grants’ would make Maynooth ‘equal to Dublin, Cambridge, or Oxford University’.⁹³ Perceval did, however, believe that Union had bound Parliament to continue to support Maynooth, despite his preference for scrapping the grant. Instead the Portland ministry instituted an enquiry. Doubting its effectiveness, Perceval told the Duke of Richmond that he would not countenance paying for four-hundred Catholic priests – ‘there is nothing can reconcile me to such a proceeding, it is to all intents and

⁸⁹ BL, Add MS 49182, fo. 235: cabinet circular on Ireland, c. 1810.

⁹⁰ Yale, OSB MSS File 11713: Perceval to Charles Butler, 2 Aug. 1811.

⁹¹ BL, Add MS 49182, fo. 138, 151: speech draft for 4 Mar. 1807.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Add MS 82612, fo. 46: Redesdale to Eldon, 18 July 1802.; *PD*, 1808, xi, 128.

⁹³ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 1229.

purposes establishing the RC religion in Ireland, & going very far to perpetuate it'.⁹⁴ He was doubtless pleased by the upheavals at Maynooth which saw five presidents between 1807 and 1813.⁹⁵ Therefore Perceval's opposition to funding Catholics, whether in principle, in small cases, or (with limitations) in the case of Maynooth, had a strong grounding in his commitment to the established Church.

As with Catholic Emancipation Perceval's opposition rested on two grounds. Publicly, Perceval followed his fellow Pittites' reasoning in opposing Catholic concessions, grounding them on establishmentarian foundations, which reaffirms the importance he attached to the Anglican Church. Funding Catholic clergy would impede efforts, through church reform, to convert Irish Catholics. Privately, Perceval was unique among senior Pittites in opposing the grants because they entailed financing idolatry. Combined they explain the unusual strength of his resistance.

Tithes

Perceval's establishmentarian credentials were similarly burnished when opposing tithe reform. His resistance was founded on the impracticality of proposed plans, which again distinguished him from other senior Pittites. Several politicians had devised their own reform plans, including ardent reformists, such as Henry Parnell; Pittites sympathetic to Catholic concessions, including Pitt and Castlereagh; and anti-emancipationists such as Lords Loughborough and Redesdale, and Arthur Wellesley when Chief Secretary to Ireland. They were joined by a roll-call of illustrious intellectual critics: Adam Smith,⁹⁶ Robert Malthus,⁹⁷

⁹⁴ BL, Add MS 49182, fo. 181: Perceval to Richmond, c. 1808.

⁹⁵ D. Kerr, 'Charles McNally: O'Connellite Bishop – Reforming Pastor', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 37 (1982), p. 12.

⁹⁶ WN, ii, pp. 440-1.

⁹⁷ T.R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* 2nd edn (London, 1803), p. 441.

Dugald Stewart,⁹⁸ and William Paley.⁹⁹ The agriculturalists Arthur Young and John Middleton, and the *Farmer's Magazine*, were also critical.¹⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly tithes were unpopular with non-Anglicans who objected to funding a different denomination's church. The Quakers' efforts to avoid paying tithes had split Walpole from Bishop Gibson in 1736, when the prelate had foiled Walpole's Quaker Tithe Bill, as explored by Stephen Taylor.¹⁰¹ Yet it was not until 1823 that tithe composition was enacted for truculent Ireland (and following the tithe war of 1831-6 commutation was enacted in 1838). English tithe commutation did not occur until 1836. Remarkably few debates about English tithes occurred during the war; whereas Irish tithe reform was annually discussed from 1808, with Perceval being a significant obstacle to change. On both subjects the historiography is limited. Grayson Ditchfield has traced the Quakers' five attempts in the latter half of the eighteenth century to secure themselves an exemption from tithes.¹⁰² Eric Evans, the pre-eminent writer on English tithes, touched on a few parliamentary skirmishes in the 1800s, whilst covering a much wider chronological period, and providing a useful description of the varying options for tithe reform. In 1970 Edward Brynn wrote a short article about the role of Irish tithes in British politics, though this mainly provided a summary of events.¹⁰³

This section therefore seeks to complement this notably limited historiography. Having explained the options for tithe reform, it will describe the reforming plans of the Pittites. Pitt proposed plans for English reform which were not subsequently followed up.

⁹⁸ D. Stewart, *Lectures on Political Economy*, ed. W. Hamilton (2 vols., London, 1855), i, pp. 122-3.

⁹⁹ W. Paley, *The principles of moral and political philosophy* (London, 1785), pp. 635-6.

¹⁰⁰ Stewart, *Political Economy*, i, pp. 123-4.

¹⁰¹ S. Taylor, 'Sir Robert Walpole, the Church of England, and the Quakers Tithe Bill of 1736', *HJ*, 28 (1985), pp. 51-77.

¹⁰² G. Ditchfield, 'Parliament, the Quakers and the Tithe Question 1750-1835', *Parliamentary History*, 4 (1985), pp. 87-104.

¹⁰³ E. Brynn, 'Irish Tithes in British Politics', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 39 (1970), pp. 295-306.

The Irish context was different, and this, alongside Parnell's agitation, ensured that the Pittites continued contemplating reforms. This shows how unusual Perceval was among the Pittites in opposing reform. Moreover, most of his fellow opponents were clergymen. Finally, we shall see how Perceval's public and then private pronouncements of opposition were grounded in his doubts about the practicality of reforms and his concern for the established Church.

There were four types of tithe reform. First, there was abolition, already enacted in France, which hardly endeared the idea to anti-revolutionaries. Even critics were careful to stress their Establishment credentials. A Kentish farmer Lena Tadmán carefully began his critique by declaring that 'Our established church, religion and ministry must be liberally supported, or England herself must fall which God forbid.'¹⁰⁴ Secondly, tithes could be replaced by their equivalent in land (commutation), the normal practice at enclosure. Between 1757 and 1835 75% of all enclosure acts implemented commutations, predominantly through granting land (glebe) to clergymen. The clergyman could, from 1803, farm his land, or rent it out. Thirdly, a one-off payment could be made, but this would be eroded by inflation. Fourthly, a money rent could be charged on previously titheable estates (composition), tied to certain prices, such as corn.¹⁰⁵ Inevitably the devil was in the detail. How would valuations be calculated? Who would assess the land? How long was the rent to last? Which price would it be linked to? Furthermore, many clergy had already moved away from unpopular payment in kind to payment in cash. This might require an annual assessment, with a value being placed on each crop per acre (for example wheat at 7-8s per acre), or paying a fixed percentage of

¹⁰⁴ E. Evans, *The Contentious Tithe: The Tithe Problem and English Agriculture* (London, 1976), p. 78.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80, 85.

rent, or a fixed payment over a series of years.¹⁰⁶ There was therefore plenty of scope for detailed objections.

In 1791 and 1798-9 Pitt had proposed schemes of English tithe reforms. These would convert tithes into a 'corn rent', which 'would lend materially to promote the Improvement of Agriculture' and giving 'Credit and Influence to the Clergy'.¹⁰⁷ Amongst those consulted and cautiously sympathetic was John Mitford, later Lord Redesdale. Therefore, when commutation was portrayed as beneficial to the clergy even conservative-minded Pittites were supportive.¹⁰⁸ But Pitt's plans met with ecclesiastical objections and were not resuscitated during war-time. Within an English context debates about tithes rarely extended beyond epistolary exchanges and speculative publications. Occasionally local bills triggered debates. A petition for composition of tithes on hops from Farnham hop-growers in 1792-3 was savaged by those alarmed at reform.¹⁰⁹ Bishop Horsley strenuously opposed the tithe commutation components of the Weldon Inclosure Bill. Ironically, Perceval represented the bill's supporter as a barrister, earning praise for his work.¹¹⁰ General English tithe reform was not debated until 1816-18.¹¹¹ The most important assault on tithes had traditionally come from Quakers. In February 1797, they made their fifth attempt in the century to gain themselves exemption. Perceval opposed the bill, unlike the Thorntons, Wilberforce and Charles Abbot. This testifies to Perceval's difference from prominent evangelical MPs and from Abbot, a fellow Pittite, opponent of repealing the Test and Corporation Act, and church

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 23-8. See also Virgin, *Church in an Age of Negligence*, pp. 35-40; W. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century 1680-1840* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 126-42.

¹⁰⁷ KHC, U1590/09/43: Pitt's tithe plan, 30 July 1798; PRONI, T3319/7: Pitt to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 16 Dec. 1791; Evans, *The Contentious Tithe*, p. 80;

¹⁰⁸ KHC, U1590/09/44: Mitford to Pitt, 31 Aug. 1798.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 74-6.

¹¹⁰ *St James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (19 May 1792), p. 1; Mather, *High Church Prophet*, pp. 143-4; S. Horsley, *The Speeches in Parliament of Samuel Horsley* (Dundee, 1813), pp. 87-166.

¹¹¹ *PD*, 1816, xxxiv, 365-9, 685-704; 1817, xxxvi, 294-6, 1070-6; 1818, xxxvii, 545-57, 1131-42.

reform champion. A tied vote brought the bill into committee, where it was rejected.¹¹²

Perceval's opposition presaged his resistance to Irish tithe reform in the years ahead.

The Irish situation differed in three notable respects. First, the religious problem was greater because Irish Catholics were the majority population and vehemently hostile to tithes. That potential Catholic MPs would quickly assail tithes was a common trope of anti-emancipation speakers. Secondly, Ireland's agricultural backwardness made tithes more pernicious. Parnell in 1809 declared that tithes were 'much more injurious ... in a country like Ireland where improvement is wanting', especially because their burden fell more heavily on the Irish than the English poor.¹¹³ Thirdly, the cries for abolition were vocal and diverse. Arthur Wellesley noted the various county meetings, notably in Limerick and Wexford, that were endorsing motions calling for tithe abolition. Wellesley stated that abolition would mean that 'The Church establishment will obviously be destroyed, and with it the Protestant religion, and along with both the State and the connection with Great Britain'.¹¹⁴ Economic oscillations and harvest fluctuations were seen to affect agitation. Foster commented amid a promising crop that 'so little is Tithe thought of, that not a Man has asked me about it, what was done, or what is to be done'.¹¹⁵

The Pittite commitment to Irish tithe reform, as with support for Catholic Emancipation, originated with the Union. A paper, which Pitt reviewed in autumn 1798, had stated:

Tithes need not be settled by the Union, but it is thought to be essential, for the peace of Ireland and the improvement of both countries, that something should be

¹¹² *PH*, xxxii, 1508-17; *Colchester*, i, pp. 85-6.

¹¹³ *PD*, 1809, xiv, 629-31.

¹¹⁴ *Wellington*, v, pp. 142, 144.

¹¹⁵ PRONI, D562/2126: Foster to Perceval, fragment c.1808.

done respecting them; and it is suggested that the principle of the redemption of the land-tax should be extended, under proper regulations, to tithes. This should be accompanied by a competent provision for a reasonable number of Catholic clergy.¹¹⁶

Castlereagh similarly dabbled in plans for tithe reform.¹¹⁷ After the Union Pittites of different hues proposed plans for reforming tithes, including the anti-Catholic peers Lords Loughborough and Redesdale, the Chief Secretary to Ireland Arthur Wellesley, and the future junior minister John Wilson Croker.¹¹⁸

Perceval did not generally share the reformist sentiment. He was unusual among laymen in taking this position. As Salim Rashid has noted, most support for tithes came from clergymen.¹¹⁹ Each charge against tithes was challenged. The Revd Henry Beeke disputed Arthur Young's claim that tithes annually cost £5 million, arguing that the gross income of tithes was only £2,850,000, and that £1.2 million went to the laity.¹²⁰ Responding to the claim that tithes in kind harmed agriculture, Bishop Horsley in 1803 asserted that 'It was well known that no counties were more flourishing than those in which tithes were paid in kind'.¹²¹ Josiah Thomas noted that the agricultural clubs lambasting tithes for impeding improvement never criticised 'the most considerable tithe-holders in the nation, who are lay-

¹¹⁶ *Castlereagh*, i, pp. 379-80.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, iv, pp. 25-6, 193-205.

¹¹⁸ *Castlereagh*, iv, p. 25; *Colchester*, i, p. 410; BL, Add MS 42774A, fo. 148: Redesdale to Rose, 11 Oct. 1804; *Wellington*, v, pp. 163-5, 167-73; J. Croker, *A Sketch of the State of Ireland, Past and Present* (London, 1808), pp. 44-6.

¹¹⁹ S. Rashid, 'Anglican Clergymen and Tithe Question in the Early Nineteenth Century', *JRH*, 11 (1980), pp. 64-76. Not all opposed commutation – 'A Country Rector' publicly wrote to Perceval calling for land allotments in lieu of tithes: 'Address to Mr Perceval on Tithes', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 79 (1809), pp. 519-20.

¹²⁰ H. Beeke, *Observations on the Produce of the Income Tax: and on its Proportion to the Whole Income of Great Britain* (London, 1800), pp. 29, 33.

¹²¹ F. Mather, *High Church Prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) and the Caroline Tradition in the Late Georgian Church* (Oxford, 1992), p. 144.

impropriators'.¹²² Irish clergymen were equally obdurate. The Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Kildare were absolutely opposed.¹²³ O'Beirne, Bishop of Meath, wrote to Foster that 'It is to be hoped that in no instance a commutation of Tithes will be encouraged'.¹²⁴ This followed the Irish clerical tradition of resisting tithe commutation dating back to Richard Woodward and his influential pamphlet of 1787.¹²⁵

Perceval shared these concerns. He opposed Redesdale's idea of treating lay and clerical tithes differently, because he dissented from the commonly held view 'that in the hands of the Church it [tithing] is more abused and more rigidly extracted than in lay hands, I believe to be directly contrary to the truth'.¹²⁶ O'Beirne, described to Perceval as 'your friend', may have influenced his doubts about commutation, just as he provided information about Maynooth.¹²⁷ Perceval's doubts about tithe reform were expressed publicly and, more forcefully, privately. In 1808, when Maurice Fitzgerald proposed action, Perceval acknowledged the arduousness of devising a scheme which 'appeared to be beset with difficulties almost insurmountable. He repeated, however, that every effort should be made to remove them'.¹²⁸ Twelve months of inaction caused Henry Parnell to propose leasing tithes for 21 years. This continued a Whig advocacy of tithe reform previously espoused by Grattan and Whitbread.¹²⁹ Perceval opposed Parnell by stressing the exacerbating rather than quieting impact of Parnell's proposal. He also claimed that tenants' payments would rise post-commutation. Perceval admitted that 'he had altered his opinion on the subject; and he thought it better at once to negative the proposition than to hold out a false hope, where no

¹²² J. Thomas, *Strictures on Subjects Chiefly Relating to the Established Religion and the Clergy: In Two Letters to his Patron, From a Country Clergyman* (London, 1807), p. 68.

¹²³ *Wellington*, v, p. 225; *Colchester*, ii, p. 157.

¹²⁴ PRONI, D207/50/24: Meath to Foster, 13 Feb. 1808.

¹²⁵ R. Woodward, *The Present State of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 1787).

¹²⁶ *Wellington*, v, p. 166.

¹²⁷ GA, D2002/3/1/20: Redesdale to Perceval, 17 May 1803; *Wellington*, v, p. 263.

¹²⁸ *PD*, 1808, xi, 909.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, ix, 735, 1206-7.

possible benefit could be expected to follow from it'.¹³⁰ Parnell subsequently proposed an enquiry into Irish tithes, which was resisted as unnecessary because information was not wanting. Perceval also emphasised that 'the difficulty was how to find a practical mode of securing the property of the church'. The same complaints about how 'it would be holding out a most mischievous delusion to the people of Ireland' to appoint an enquiry, mingled with a defence of clergymen's right to a tenth of the tithe, were repeated in 1810. This opposition distinguished him from the 'Saints' Thomas Babington and Wilberforce.¹³¹ In 1811 the motion was met by the Chief Secretary William Wellesley Pole, who also 'despaired of finding a remedy'.¹³² Perceval therefore steadfastly prevented Irish tithe reform passing through parliament during his ministry. His opposition was partly, as with emancipation, about avoiding unrest in Ireland, but he foregrounded the importance of securing the Church.

Privately, Perceval also expressed concerns about the details of reform proposals and the threat they posed to the established Church. Perceval's critique of Wellesley's tithe plan in November 1807 was twofold. First, he criticised details of the plan. For example, Irish tithes often amounted, in practice, to only a thirtieth, not the permitted tenth. But Perceval was wary that stressing how clergy voluntarily under-collected tithes would serve to justify abolishing tithes if clergymen began collecting their full legal due.¹³³ Secondly, he suggested strong doubts about general reform:

On the general subject ... I am not without considerable doubts. The yielding upon a great point of national establishment, the breaking in upon an ancient and extensive system, not upon the ground of a certain conviction that you are

¹³⁰ Ibid., 1809, xiv, 635-8.

¹³¹ Ibid., 1810, xvi, 688-9.

¹³² Ibid., 1811, xx, 580-4.

¹³³ *Wellington*, v, pp. 166, 168-9.

reforming and improving that system, but on the importunity of unjust and exaggerated complaint, showing itself almost in the shape of rebellion, is and must be a dangerous thing for government at all times, and is only repeating in a fresh and striking instance the unfortunate lesson which has been too often and too successfully taught in Ireland, that if discontent will but be turbulent enough, it will force its object from a yielding government.¹³⁴

When writing to George III, Perceval regretted that Irish members were more disposed to tithe reform 'than what could be wished'. The King expressed confidence that the government were 'sensible as it must be of the tendency of such proposals ... and will endeavour to prevent their gaining ground'.¹³⁵ Perceval's views on tithes were also explained in detail to William Fitzgerald, in a letter now at the University of Cambridge that was part of Plumb's bequest and therefore unavailable to Gray or Brynn. Seeking to entice William Fitzgerald to join his ministry, Perceval admitted to an earlier belief that these problems could be solved. Perseverance yielded the conclusion that the idea was 'unattainable except thro' such violation of principle & such robbery of eccle[siastical] right, or such aggravation of the very mischief intended to be prevented'.¹³⁶ Similarly, when Perceval replied to Wellesley Pole's proposals for Irish affairs in 1810, he declared that no tithe plan yet existed:

that will not either do great injustice to the Church, by depriving it of its property, or bring a much greater burden upon the people than is borne at present. In truth the great clamour against tythes [*sic*] is kept up by the interested landlords, who

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 166.

¹³⁵ *LCGIII*, v, pp. 280-1.

¹³⁶ CUL, MS Add 8713/XVI/C/12: Perceval to Fitzgerald, 18 Nov. 1809.

know that the abolition of tythes would give them a greater additional means of increasing their rents, while the tenants would derive no relief from it at all.¹³⁷

Examining Perceval's attitude towards tithe reform helps flesh out the war-time opinions on tithe reform, with previous scholarship having tended to concentrate on the post-war era. It demonstrates that Perceval disagreed with Pitt and other prominent Pittites less on tithes than on other Catholic questions. He was more open to reforming tithes. Though tithes were a legal right for clergymen, he never voiced religious objections to their commutation equivalent to his anti-Catholic positions. But his unwillingness to reform was greater than other anti-Catholic Pittites, including Liverpool who enacted Irish tithe commutation in 1823.¹³⁸ Perceval's chief concern was upholding clerical rights and income, especially in Ireland. When joined with his steadfast championing of the established Churches in England and Ireland, his support for Irish conversion to Anglicanism, and his theological and constitutional reasons for condemning Catholic Emancipation, funds for Maynooth, and Roman Catholic priests, Perceval's 'Anglican' credentials were brightly burnished in his dealings with Irish religious questions.

Church of Scotland

We have seen the contrasting Pittite attitudes towards Catholic questions, and how Perceval was their staunchest, and most religiously motivated, opponent. Let us now consider the approach taken towards non-Anglican Protestants. Wilberforce, along with many Anglican evangelicals, was friendly with Dissenters; and we might expect an 'evangelical' Spencer

¹³⁷ BL, Add MS 49182, fo. 233: Perceval cabinet memorandum, c. 1810.

¹³⁸ *Wellington*, v, pp. 174-5; Best, *Temporal Pillars*, pp. 177, 267.

Perceval to share that view. Equally, given the Church of Scotland's establishment status, we might assume that the government adopted a similar approach as towards the Anglican established Churches. Instead this section argues that Perceval was lukewarm towards the Church of Scotland, being less engaged with its appointments and improvement than the established Churches in England and Ireland. The Kirk during the latter part of the Napoleonic Wars is little studied, scholarship normally being restricted to its internal church politics,¹³⁹ or featuring within wider discussions of the Dundas family patronage.¹⁴⁰ Therefore this section begins by explaining how church-state relations worked during the Portland and Perceval ministries. It argues that the Church of Scotland rarely intruded into Westminster business and that Perceval had little influence over church patronage. We then examine Perceval's involvement in the 1808 Teinds Act and the parliamentary grant of 1810, which imply that Perceval was supportive towards the Kirk. However, considering the approach towards Church of Scotland chaplains, alongside Perceval's willingness to donate to the Episcopalian Scottish Church, demonstrates that Perceval adopted a different approach towards the Kirk than the Anglican established churches – one which discloses an Anglican rather than evangelical theological identity.

The Presbyterian Church of Scotland rarely intruded into Westminster. Several MPs and peers argued that this demonstrated the compatibility of different denominations, thereby justifying Catholic Emancipation.¹⁴¹ Redesdale, the Scott brothers (Sir William and Lord Eldon), and Perceval, all challenged this analogy. Eldon contended that it would be harder to overturn the Scottish Test Act than the Anglo-Irish Test Acts, therefore presenting a strong

¹³⁹ I. Clark, 'From Protest to Reaction: The Moderate Regime in the Church of Scotland 1752-1805', in N. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1970), pp. 200-24; A. Drummond and J. Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688-1843: The Age of Moderates* (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 154-8.

¹⁴⁰ D. Brown, 'Henry Dundas and the Government of Scotland' (Edinburgh Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1989), pp. 380-97.

¹⁴¹ *PD*, 1805, iv, 669; 1812, xxii, 603-4, 667, 676.

reason against Catholic Emancipation.¹⁴² Conversely, in 1805, the Earl of Buckinghamshire asserted that admitting Catholics might leave the Church of England dependent on Scottish representatives, inclined to place that institution on the same rock of poverty as the Church of Scotland was reputedly built.¹⁴³ This suspicion of non-episcopal institutions echoed the high-Church archdeacon Charles Daubeney, who contested the Kirk's right to be called a church.¹⁴⁴ However, hostility was rarer than admiration; Adam Smith, most notably, commended the quality of Caledonian clergy.¹⁴⁵ Perceval voiced sorrow at hearing rebukes of the Scottish clergy for greediness: 'for he had before understood ... [they] were a most respectable body of men, against whom there was less ground of reproach than almost any other class whatever'.¹⁴⁶

The hearsay nature of Perceval's comment suggests that he was unacquainted with actual Scottish clergy. This partly reflects the continuing dominance of the Church of Scotland by the Dundas family. We cannot easily compare Perceval's approach to English and Scottish ecclesiastical patronage because the latter did not fall within his purview. Under Pitt, Henry Dundas, later 1st Viscount Melville, had preferred the Moderate party to the evangelical 'Popular Party' of the Kirk when dispensing ecclesiastical patronage.¹⁴⁷ The Dundas dominance persisted during the Portland and Perceval ministries. In rural parishes, Henry and Robert Dundas tried to accommodate the wishes of the local landed interest.¹⁴⁸ In urban areas ideally 'a Clergyman not much engaged in either the ecclesiastical or political intrigues of the day' would be found. Their attachment to the Moderates waned. The 1st

¹⁴² Ibid., iv, 1065; 1807, ix, 7; 1812, xxii, 689-90, 864.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 1805, iv, 749.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, *National Churches*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁵ WN, ii, p. 404.

¹⁴⁶ PD, 1807, viii, 558.

¹⁴⁷ William Clements Library, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Melville Papers: Melville to Robert Dundas, 11 Mar. 1811.

¹⁴⁸ M. Fry, *A New Race of Men: Scotland 1815-1914* (Edinburgh, 2013), p. 254.

Viscount refused to accept ‘the extreme of the Claims’ of the ‘Moderate interest’ and did not view ‘the general political Principles of a Candidate for a Church’ as the only principle to be entertained.¹⁴⁹ His son and heir, Robert Dundas, according to David Brown, preferred clergymen loyal to the constitution over any particular partisan allegiances.¹⁵⁰ Aside from the Dundas influence, a letter from Robert Dundas to Wilberforce about helping a distressed Mr Henderson testifies that ecclesiastical patronage in Scotland was officially overseen by the Home Secretary, Richard Ryder. But in Crown livings ‘the wishes of the Gentlemen of the Parish are generally attended to; so that it rarely happens that the Secretary of State is quite unfettered in his choice’.¹⁵¹ A similar view was expressed by the Lord Advocate Archibald Colquhoun.¹⁵² Robert Dundas commented that ‘the crown would be [a] public nuisance and a most mischievous promoter of discontent in religious matters’ if it interfered in church affairs.¹⁵³ In 1829 Peel informed Sir Walter Scott that ‘according to the existing usage the Crown has no Church Patronage in Scotland’.¹⁵⁴ Perceval’s lack of involvement in Scottish ecclesiastical patronage contrasts with the correspondence that shows he was consulted on Scottish legal and university appointments.¹⁵⁵ However, even Perceval’s engagement with Scottish universities displays relative ignorance on his part. Hence St Andrews University complained that a Treasury proposal in 1808 to levy stamp duties on university degrees was ‘express [sic] in terms peculiar to the practice of the English Universities, they are not

¹⁴⁹ William Clements Library, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Melville Papers: Melville to Robert Dundas, 11 Mar. 1811.

¹⁵⁰ Brown, ‘Henry Dundas’, pp. 396-7.

¹⁵¹ Bodleian, MS Wilberforce d. 17/2, fo. 188: 2nd Viscount Melville to Wilberforce, 17 Feb. 1812.

¹⁵² BL, Add MS 38243, fo. 56: Colquhoun to Liverpool, 22 Nov. 1808.

¹⁵³ Fry, *New Race of Men*, p. 255.

¹⁵⁴ *The Private Letter-Books of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. W. Partington (1930), p. 43.

¹⁵⁵ Holland (Perceval) Papers, Bound Volume, fo. 50: Sir Walter Scott to Perceval, 16 Sep. nd.; Copy Letters, fo. 42: Perceval to William Dundas, 4 Sep. 1811; D.27: Duke of Montrose to Perceval, 22 Nov. 1809; St Andrews University, MS 4625: Lord Melville to Rector James Playfair, 16 June 1810; Melville to Perceval, 14 June 1810; Perceval to Melville, 15 June 1810; MS 4489: Playfair to Melville, 23 June 1810.

perfectly adapted to the Universities of Scotland'.¹⁵⁶ This was entirely characteristic of the Hanoverian era, when Scottish politicians such as Argyll or Dundas ran Scottish affairs rather than Walpole or Pitt.

However, the general lack of interest in Scottish church affairs in London had exceptions. One exception, where Perceval supported the Church of Scotland, was the augmentation of clerical stipends. This issue developed in three stages, beginning with debates in 1807, followed by a Teinds Act in 1808, and a government grant in 1810. The context was that responsibility for paying clergymen fell upon the heritors (local landowners) contributing teinds, the Scottish equivalent of tithes. As with poor rates this proved controversial and resort could be had to legislation, which in 1803 raised the salary of schoolmasters.¹⁵⁷ The other approach was to get the Court of Session in Edinburgh to augment stipends. In January 1807 the Talents introduced a Scottish clergy bill to suspend the Court of Session's power to augment stipends. William Dundas, nephew of Henry Dundas, commended the measure because 'a race had been run by the clergy of that country for augmentations of their stipends'.¹⁵⁸ This was the occasion of Perceval's comments about the character of the Scottish clergy. A reluctance to raise stipends too much was voiced again when, later that session, the Lord Advocate proposed transferring legal oversight to the Court of the Exchequer, alongside a bill to improve Scottish clerical stipends when their teinds were exhausted. William Dundas worried that 'the application of the revenues of vacant benefices might exceed the moderate and suitable provision he proposed' for 'middle rank' clergymen.¹⁵⁹ This need to balance interests also guided policy-making during the Pittite governments.

¹⁵⁶ Holland (Perceval) Papers, C. 8: Representation from St Andrews University, 4 May 1808.

¹⁵⁷ *The Morning Post* (6 May 1803), p. 2; 43 Geo III. c. 54.

¹⁵⁸ *PD*, 1807, viii, 558.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 839.

Concerns about the augmentation of stipends, paid for by higher teinds, returned in spring 1808, now focusing on possible time restrictions on augmentations. A worried Robert Dundas wanted an amicable settlement between the landholders and the clergy, corresponding with Perceval on the best course to take.¹⁶⁰ Perceval replied optimistically, citing the small difference between the views of the Scottish clergy, who wanted restrictions on new augmentations to last for twelve years, and the Lord Advocate's proposed fifteen years. He noted Eldon's view that the measure would assist with legal rulings.¹⁶¹ Legislation was duly introduced, seemingly without debate, and passed through Parliament in May and June 1808.¹⁶² The Teinds Act prevented new modifications for stipends augmented before the Act for fifteen years, and imposed a twenty-year limit for stipends augmented subsequently.¹⁶³ Alongside this measure funds were provided to cover the Church of Scotland's debts.¹⁶⁴

In 1810, when grants were made to the established Churches in England and Ireland, a grant of £10,000 was made for that purpose to the Church of Scotland. Its objective was to raise clerical livings to £150. Given lay objections to funding higher augmentations, this would require a Treasury grant. Perceval's introductory speech of 28 May 1810 is absent from *Parliamentary Debates*, but several varying newspaper accounts do survive. Perceval justified the stipend's size because 'there were no prospects of promotion in the Scotch Church such as in the English ... It was therefore only reasonable they should all be removed

¹⁶⁰ William Clements Library, Melville Papers: Robert Dundas to Perceval, 27 Apr. 1808.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., Perceval to Robert Dundas, 27 Apr. 1808.

¹⁶² *JC*, 63 (1808), pp. 370, 384, 394, 412, 461, 476; *Morning Chronicle* (27 May 1808), p. 2, idem, (10 June 1808), p. 2; *Morning Post* (2 June 1808), p. 2; *Caledonian Mercury* (4 June 1808) p. 3; idem (13 June 1808), p. 3.

¹⁶³ 48 Geo. 3 c. 138.

¹⁶⁴ Holland (Perceval) Papers XXII.68.a: Lord Melville to Perceval, 16 Apr. 1808; 68.b: Memorandum 'Note respecting the funds of the Church of Scotland', 15 Apr. 1808.

from a state of poverty'.¹⁶⁵ George Hill, former Moderator of the Church of Scotland, reckoned that there were over fifty parishes in Scotland where 'no redress could be had' except by a Parliamentary grant.¹⁶⁶ In 1812 funds were provided to repair the throne put up in the General Assembly,¹⁶⁷ and to pay for catechists and preachers in the Highlands, which Perceval doubled to £2,000.¹⁶⁸

This expenditure raises the question – was the Church of Scotland treated differently from the Anglican established churches? The grants would suggest not. Yet post-war incidents occurred where the Church of Scotland was treated differently. Opposition from heritors delayed grants for Scottish church-building in Scotland, and restricted it to the Highlands and Islands. This contrasted with the beneficent 1818 grant for the Church of England.¹⁶⁹ In 1816 the Bishop of London opposed establishing the Church of Scotland in the West Indies. Melville in 1824 argued that except in extraordinary circumstances no 'parliamentary aid' should be given to colonial Church of Scotland clergy, a view which Liverpool supported over Canning's doubts.¹⁷⁰ Two examples show that the Church of Scotland was also treated differently during war-time. The first focuses on army chaplains within Britain. The Chaplain-General John Owen, for example, was reticent about paying Church of Scotland clergymen.¹⁷¹ The position of Chaplain-General was itself objectionable to the Church of Scotland, with the commission of the General Assembly in February 1810 calling for the establishment of a new and separate Chaplain General for Scotland, and for

¹⁶⁵ *Morning Chronicle* (29 May 1810), p. 2; *Examiner* (3 June 1810), p. 4; *Bury and Norwich Post* (6 June 1810), p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ G. Hill, *A View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland* 2nd edn (Edinburgh, 1817), pp. 160-2, 201-3.

¹⁶⁷ Holland (Perceval) Papers, Copy Letters, fo. 47: Perceval to Lord Napier, 14 Apr. 1812.

¹⁶⁸ NLS, MS 10683, fo. 5: Archibald Colquhoun to Perceval, 12 May 1812, fo. 9: Colquhoun to Richard Wharton, 21 May 1812.

¹⁶⁹ Fry, *New Race of Men*, p. 255.

¹⁷⁰ *HMC Bathurst*, pp. 427, 569-70.

¹⁷¹ M. Snape, *The Royal Army Chaplains' Department, 1796-1953: Clergy Under Fire* (Woodbridge, 2008). p. 37.

Presbyterian clergymen to serve as chaplains.¹⁷² When military chaplaincies were reorganised in November 1810, the Treasury Board discussed the General Assembly's ideas. The Board, which Perceval officially headed, and Palmerston, instead followed Lieutenant General Lord Cathcart's advice 'that no alteration be made in the mode in which divine Service has hitherto be administered to the Troops in Scotland & that the Commissions of the Chaplains of the Garrisons of Edinburgh, Stirling & Fort George may continue in force, as if they had not been revoked'.¹⁷³ Calvert had reported in January 1810 that separate Episcopalian and Presbyterian services took place at Leith Fort, Haddington, Berwick and Stirling Castle.¹⁷⁴ This shows insensitivity towards the Church of Scotland. A second example, although a small action on Perceval's part, is telling as to the subtle differences in how the Church of Scotland was treated compared to its southern counterparts. Shortly before his assassination Perceval donated £50, the same as Lord Grenville, to a private subscription supporting Episcopalian clergy, alongside various bishops and high-Church figures such as the Hackney Phalangist Henry Handley Norris.¹⁷⁵ It is unthinkable that Perceval would have donated money in the same way to support the non-established clergy in England and Ireland.

Therefore, we have a mixed image of the Pittite approach to the Church of Scotland in 1807-12. Predominantly it remained under the management of the Dundas family, little changed from Pitt's time. In financial terms, similar aid was given to the Church of Scotland as to the established Churches in England and Ireland. However, the same approach was not

¹⁷² NLS, MS 1057, fo. 42: A. Brunton to Sir James Suttie, 8 Feb. 1810; A. Crawley, *Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland: A History of the Military Chaplains prior to the War in the Crimea* (London, 1962), p. 262.

¹⁷³ TNA, T29/108, fo. 239: minute of Board of the Treasury meeting, 22 Nov. 1810; WO 43/578, fo. 201: John Owen to Palmerston, 24 Dec. 1810, fo. 203: Palmerston note, 9. Nov. 1810, fo. 222: Palmerston to Cathcart, 7 Dec. 1810, fo. 223: Harrison to Palmerston, 30 Nov. 1810, fo. 224: draft circular letter of Palmerston to three chaplains in Scotland, 7 Dec. 1810.

¹⁷⁴ TNA WO 43/578, fo. 206: 'Return of the Arrangements made in North Britain for the Performance of Religious Duties to the Forces, for the Month ending 24th January 1810'.

¹⁷⁵ *Bombay Courier* (18 July 1812), pp. 1-2.

always followed. Attitudes towards Scottish Episcopalians among their fellow denominationalists south of the border were demonstrably warmer than those towards Protestant or Catholic dissenters from the Anglican established Churches. This was demonstrated both by the approach towards military chaplaincies, and by Perceval's donation to help Episcopalian clergy.

Nonconformists

When Perceval was assassinated, in the lobby was William Smith MP. The foremost Dissenter and campaigner for their cause, nevertheless Smith must have been especially alarmed, for Perceval's murder jeopardised months of negotiations.¹⁷⁶ The irony was that Perceval, the firm supporter of the Church of England, had that day agreed to concessions for its nonconformist rivals. This section examines how and why this 'Anglican Prime Minister', leading a staunchly establishmentarian government, tolerated these concessions. It will show how Perceval's anti-Catholicism caused him to concede relatively conservative concessions to Protestant nonconformists to ensure their support against the greater threat of Catholic Emancipation. It begins by demonstrating his staunchly anti-Dissenter views. Unfortunately, J.J. Sack, when discussing 'Tory' attitudes towards Dissenters virtually omitted the Napoleonic War years.¹⁷⁷ This section helps to correct this, stressing the lingering Pittite concerns felt about Irish Presbyterians and Methodism. This foreshadows scrutiny of Sidmouth's anti-itinerants bill, the agitation against it, and the subsequent lobbying of Perceval to revise the Toleration Act. It is argued that Perceval was, self-confessedly, sympathetic to Sidmouth's bill, but opposed it, and acquiesced in concessions, to buttress the

¹⁷⁶ R. Davis, *Dissent in Politics, 1780-1830: The Political Life of William Smith, M.P.* (London, 1971), p. 179.

¹⁷⁷ Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative*, p. 202.

anti-Catholic cause. This section therefore illuminates the difference between Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect, with their nonconformist sympathies, and Perceval, with his reticence about them. This helps correct Gray's claim that Perceval's attitudes towards Dissenters was 'far more liberal' than towards Catholics – a claim he made based on three lines of discussion of the subject.¹⁷⁸

In February 1812 Perceval commented to Mansel that 'Dissenters are pelting me as a High Church Bigot'.¹⁷⁹ The pelting continued posthumously. The radical Welsh Baptist minister William Richards called Perceval's assassination a 'shocking catastrophe', but added 'we would fain hope it will operate as a warning to all future ministers, not to trifle with the serious complaints and sufferings of their fellow subjects',¹⁸⁰ hoping that concessions to Catholics and Dissenters, parliamentary reform and peace would follow. Similarly, a Unitarian journal, while commending Perceval's private character, challenged the parliamentary grant to his family:

We are at a loss in looking for services, which particularly in the present state of the country can justify such a grant. Respectable as he was in private life, he does not appear in his public character, to have any great claim for public regard. His want of liberality in matters of religion and his participation in the abuses which are as notorious as the sun at noon day, would be a blot upon a character that had the highest claim to respect ... [He was] totally out of his element in the office of Premier.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁹ BL, Add MS 49185, fo. 92: Perceval to Mansel, 6 Feb. 1812.

¹⁸⁰ *The Writings of the Radical Welsh Baptist Minister William Richards*, ed. J. Oddy (1794-1818) (New York, 2008), pp. 229-30.

¹⁸¹ [Anon], 'Monthly Retrospect of Public Affairs', *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*, 7 (1813), pp. 342-3.

Given the views that he articulated for most of his career these critical contemporary judgements are unsurprising. Perceval was adamantly opposed to nonconformists being admitted to Parliament through repeal of the Test Act. This opinion was initially expressed in the 1790s against the backdrop of Dissenter campaigning to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts in 1787, 1789 and 1790, and the Unitarian radicalism of Joseph Priestley and Richard Price. Hence Perceval claimed that Dissenter ideas were incompatible with the security of civil government because ‘almost all Dissenters levellers – all Dissenters agt. [against] Episcopacy connected essentially with the Constitution’. This justified excluding devout Dissenters, and was doubly problematic because Perceval asserted that it would presage ‘the introduction, propagation & establishment of a System of religion & govt different from that which we wish to preserve, & the preservation of which appears essential to the interests & the liberty of this country’.¹⁸² These arguments echo those used against Catholic Emancipation. First, establish the right to exclude based on religious beliefs. Second, stress the political danger that could be linked to the denomination. Third, postulate (or scaremonger) that harmful consequences would follow through further changes, including that intolerance would result. Anglicanism was, this argument suggests, tolerant in contrast to other denominations. In 1805, whilst focusing on Catholic Emancipation, Perceval also privately repeated his opposition to repealing the Test and Corporation Acts for Dissenters. He wrote ‘that the dissenters, to a man are enemies to the established mode of Ch Gov^t by Episcopacy, & that Episcopacy is essentially connected with the constitution of the Country’.¹⁸³ These quotations are revealing for the importance Perceval attached to episcopacy, as a crucial feature of the constitution in church and state. Taken with his

¹⁸² BL, Add MS 49179, fo. 15-6: draft speech.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 49812, fo. 9: draft speech on Test Act.

opposition to relieving Quakers from tithes, he steadfastly opposed the cherished causes of nonconformists.

In the six years following 1805, English nonconformists were decidedly muted, not agitating for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts as Catholics were. Hence the historiographical neglect of Pittite attitudes. However, earlier associations of Dissenters with disloyalty persisted. In Ireland, Arthur Wellesley resisted establishing a Presbyterian University at Belfast, partly because 'it would separate to a greater degree this numerous sect from the inhabitants of Great Britain and from their own countrymen', and because 'the institution is to be governed by the votes of subscribers of five guineas, and that it is probable that the republican spirit of the Presbyterians will pervade the system of education, as well as all the proceedings of the institution'.¹⁸⁴ However, Irish Presbyterians continued to receive their royal payments, the *regium donum*.¹⁸⁵ In England and in the colonies nonconformists, including the 'Wesleyan' Methodists, continually protested their political reliability. Strikingly, hints drawn up for a Methodist conversation with Perceval in 1811 included, as the second point to be made, 'That Mr Wesley never intended to form a distinct Sect but merely to do good among the existing denominations of Christians but chiefly in the Church of England. Hence numbers of our Society consider themselves as members of the Establishment & do not chuse [sic] to rank with Dissenters'.¹⁸⁶ When meeting Perceval, Methodists clearly thought that it was tactically adroit to stress their Anglican attachments.

The war-time growth of Methodism was mainly concentrated in rural areas such as Lincolnshire and Caernarvonshire. Contrastingly their numbers fell in Wolverhampton and Blackburn from 1791 to 1815, and where membership rose (Wakefield, Manchester,

¹⁸⁴ *Wellington*, v, p. 636.

¹⁸⁵ PRONI, D207/26/28: Foster's notes on support for nonconformist ministers, particularly the Ulster Synod, in 1809-10.

¹⁸⁶ John Rylands Library, MAW MS5/5/3 fo. 68: 'Hints for conversation with Mr Perceval'.

Bradford) it did not keep pace with population.¹⁸⁷ Responses to this increase were contrasting. In *The Edinburgh Review* Sydney Smith was vehemently hostile.¹⁸⁸ Robert Southey, in *The Quarterly Review*, offered a mixed judgement. Perceval paid particular attention to Southey's views. The poet was informed that Perceval thought it 'the fairest & most comprehensive treatise he ever saw on any subject',¹⁸⁹ and 'Perceval it seems is greatly taken with my remarks upon the Methodists, & would probably give me a living if I were in a situation to take one'. Instead Southey's brother was promoted to lieutenant in the Royal Navy.¹⁹⁰ Southey's article suggested that Methodism's increase arose from the absence or poor quality of Anglican clergy. He acknowledged that Methodists did promote sobriety, industry, frugality, lawfulness, and established benefit-societies. However, criticism was levelled at their potential for madness, and their puritanical manners and attitudes. Southey reckoned that Methodist preachers' faith lacked 'all its outward grace', and 'That men of these feelings, this temper, and these principles; would persecute, if they had the power, no reasonable man can doubt'. Their expansion nurtured 'The sectarian spirit' over the 'national spirit'. Southey urged imitation of their positive aspects by the establishment: such as teaching about church history through biographies.¹⁹¹ These views were broadly shared by Perceval.¹⁹² But even as Southey was enjoying the fruits of his labours, debate over Dissenters and Methodists was bursting into life.

¹⁸⁷ A. Harvey, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, 1978), pp. 72-3.

¹⁸⁸ Smith, *Works of Sydney Smith*, pp. 97-114.

¹⁸⁹ Southey, Letter 1877: Robert Southey to Thomas Southey, 2 Mar. 1811, accessed 28 Apr. 2016 at

http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Four/HTML/letterEEd.26.1877.html

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., Letter 1921: R. Southey to Herbert Hill, 12 May. 1811, accessed 28 Apr. 2016 at http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Four/HTML/letterEEd.26.1921.html

¹⁹¹ [R. Southey], 'On the Evangelical Sects', *QR*, 4 (1810), pp. 480-514.

¹⁹² Nonconformists certainly thought so. See John Rylands Library MAW MS4/2 fo. 19: J. Ward to Thomas Allan, 27 July 1811.

The cause was Viscount Sidmouth's anti-itinerants bill, introduced on 9 May 1811. The bill proposed that six 'reputable housekeepers of the persuasion' of the preacher produce supporting certificates which would permit a nonconformist to be licensed under the 1689 Toleration Act, for a specific congregation. The stated goal was to suppress ignorant itinerant preachers. Revealingly, Sidmouth simultaneously called for a hundred new Anglican churches in London – a measure which Earl Stanhope suggested should have been preferred to an attack on Dissenters.¹⁹³ This demonstrated the bill's paradoxical motive. Sidmouth's professed aim was to protect Dissenters against unscrupulous adventurers masquerading as men of faith. Yet he evidently hoped that nonconformity would decrease and Anglicanism increase.

Throughout the preceding decade Anglicans, especially clergymen, had increasingly supported restricting itinerancy. Nonconformist licences had risen from 80 in 1760-6 to 1318 in 1795-1801 and 1068 in 1802-8.¹⁹⁴ These were not merely statistics. The Bishop of Chester advised Lord Grenville that he feared 'the established religion cannot exist much longer in the Country: and I think the Line from Manchester thro' Yorkshire to Richmond ... will convince any one of this truth who shall pass it on Horseback. I wish the Dissenters may not now be the majority in that tract'.¹⁹⁵ Hence he supported MP Hawkins Browne's plan to require certificates testifying to the morality of preachers, certifying their doctrines and restricting 'their function to certain districts, and in building distinct & appropriated to Divine Worship only'. In 1800 Michael Angelo Taylor, despite having Foxite allegiances, sponsored a bill to curtail itinerancy. Bishops approved of the measure,¹⁹⁶ with Pitt's friend and tutor

¹⁹³ *PD*, 1811, xix, 781, 1128-40.

¹⁹⁴ Rutz, 'Politicizing of Evangelical Dissent', p. 190.

¹⁹⁵ *BL*, Add MS 59001, fo. 107: Bishop of Chester to Grenville, 13 Nov. 1799.

¹⁹⁶ *Castlereagh*, iv, pp. 53-9; Murray, 'Influence of the French Revolution', pp. 174-9, 204-10.

Pretymen denouncing itinerants as a ‘wandering tribe of fanatical teachers’.¹⁹⁷ But assailing itinerancy was thought to jeopardise the loyalty of Methodists. Alexander Knox, a Methodist irenic who had been Castlereagh’s private secretary, told him that ‘the whole body [of Methodists] would be absolutely set mad. Their existence depends on *itinerancy*’.¹⁹⁸ Wilberforce also dissuaded Pitt from following Pretymen, his concern being the potential impact on evangelicals.¹⁹⁹ Pause may also have been given by Taylor’s Durham Dissenter constituents, who caused his electoral defeat in 1802.²⁰⁰

Yet Anglicans continued to be worried and hostile. Josiah Thomas warned in 1807 that ‘we behold their [Methodist] canting repositories raised, and rising, in almost every parish, and, in some manufacturing towns, outnumbering the churches’.²⁰¹ Thomas later wrote to Sidmouth, dismissing pluralism and non-residency as problems among establishment clergy, and supporting his bill.²⁰² Other defenders of the church also called for tighter requirements to gain a preaching licence. Perceval’s acquaintance Edward Pearson even suggested examining would-be preachers in the Greek version of the Gospels.²⁰³ Opponents of banning itinerants could countenance some regulations. Wilberforce, for example, accepted requiring a teacher to receive ‘a testimonial from the sect to which he should belong’, thereby stopping ‘a number of raw, ignorant lads going out on preaching parties every Sunday’.²⁰⁴ Knox was willing to require a statement of denominational allegiance and four supporting testimonials to prevent ‘unworthy persons assuming their

¹⁹⁷ Murray, *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹⁹⁸ Castlereagh, iv, p. 56.

¹⁹⁹ Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, ii, p. 365.

²⁰⁰ E. Elbourne, ‘The Foundation of the Church Missionary Society: The Anglican Missionary Impulse’, in J. Walsh, C. Haydon, and S. Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 253.

²⁰¹ Thomas, *Strictures on the Established Religion and the Clergy*, p. 109.

²⁰² DRO, 152M/C1811/OE: Josiah Thomas to Sidmouth, 13 May 1811.

²⁰³ Senex, *Established Church*, p. 15; Pearson, *Remarks on the Dangers*, pp. 66-9; *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, 28 (1807), p. 46.

²⁰⁴ Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, ii, p. 361.

[nonconformist denominations] name'.²⁰⁵ The Bishop of Gloucester suggested in May 1809 to Sidmouth how to proceed. This included exhorting that 'Much discussion should be had with principal men among the Dissenters'. Gloucester reiterated the paradoxical motives underpinning the plan by simultaneously advocating Anglican church-building.²⁰⁶ We see again the cautious approach of information-gathering preceding action in Sidmouth's call for information about licences on 2 June 1809; this was accompanied by an exhortation for church-building. Likewise, on 19 June 1810 Sidmouth asked for information on both Dissenting meeting houses and Anglican churches in parishes with over a thousand people.²⁰⁷ Therefore Sidmouth undermined the illusion that his measure was simply about enhancing nonconformist respectability, rather than bolstering the established Church.

Sidmouth laboured under two misapprehensions. First, he reckoned that respectable nonconformists and Methodists would welcome his proposal. He flattered both Thomas Coke and Adam Clarke that it would be in the Methodists' best interests, and believed that William Smith, as Chairman of the Dissenting Deputies, was sympathetic.²⁰⁸ Secondly, Sidmouth expected the government to support him. These assumptions were rapidly discredited. Sidmouth introduced his bill on 9 May 1811. Nonconformists strongly disapproved of this perceived assault on their religious liberties. The Baptist minister Andrew Fuller commented that within thirty-six hours of the bill being printed 'It seemed as if half the nation had risen, drawn up petitions, signed them & sent them up to London in that short space!' He acknowledged that 'the promptness of the Methodists and dissenters rather than their numbers' was crucial.²⁰⁹ Lord Holland recounted that:

²⁰⁵ *Castlereagh*, iv, p. 59.

²⁰⁶ *Sidmouth*, iii, p. 39.

²⁰⁷ *PD*, 1809, xiv, 854-7; 1810, xvii, 770-1.

²⁰⁸ D. Hempton, *Methodist and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* (London, 1984), p. 99; Davies, *Dissent in Politics*, p. 156.

²⁰⁹ Regent's Park, The Angus Library Oxford, Fuller Papers, Box H1/1: A. Fuller to W. Ward, 7 Oct. 1811.

For some days no places were to be had in the stage coaches and diligences of the kingdom; all were occupied with petitions to Parliament against the measure proposed by Lord Sidmouth. On the day fixed for the debate such innumerable petitions were presented ... that not only the table was filled, but the House was filled with parchment. The peers could hardly get to the doors, the avenues were so crowded with men of grave deportment and puritanical aspect; when there, they had almost equal difficulty in gaining their seats, for loads of parchment encumbered and obstructed their way to them.²¹⁰

This flurry of activity was chiefly important for the change it wrought in government attitudes. Perceval's ministry was not ideologically opposed. The government sympathised with Sidmouth's wish to build churches, and church reform was aimed at diminishing nonconformity. Although Harrowby had carefully avoided endorsing restrictions on Dissenter licences, Eldon had 'hoped that something might be done to prevent those abuses that were practiced on the Toleration Act' by those shirking civil or military service.²¹¹ Perceval subsequently admitted to being sympathetic to Sidmouth's bill, but his opinion altered when 'I found Lord Sidmouth's object and intention so completely mistaken' by the nonconformists.²¹² The bill was brought up for second reading on Friday 17 May, but the debate on its main principle was fixed for Tuesday 21 May.²¹³ On the intervening Sunday Perceval wrote hurriedly to Sidmouth, enclosing a letter from 'a very respectable man a Friend of mine' that caused him to 'fear that the mistaken view which is taken of your

²¹⁰ *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*, p. 101.

²¹¹ *PD*, 1809, xiv, 857-8.

²¹² *BL*, Add MS 38247, fo. 185-6: Perceval to William Smith, 17 Apr. 1812.

²¹³ *PD*, 1811, xx, 196-8.

measure will in the fever which Dissenters are exciting in themselves, never be corrected, and that a great deal more evil than good will come out of it'.²¹⁴ Additionally, in March 1811 Wilberforce had lobbied Perceval, as he previously had Pitt, on the imprudence of the policy, especially in preventing Evangelical gatherings.²¹⁵ Lord Liverpool added his views the following day, agreeing with Perceval and articulating the fear that:

The dissenters as a Body have brought forward no Claims and have engaged in no Political Controversy with the Establishment of the Country for the last fifteen years. We have hitherto felt the advantage of their Conduct in all our Contests with the Catholicks, and I own I am apprehensive that if the measure in Question is to be persevered in We may unite the Catholicks and all other Dissenters in the same course.²¹⁶

Sidmouth wrote expressing his opposition to capitulating to agitation and contending that only the government could stop his bill's passage.²¹⁷ A meeting with Perceval and Liverpool on the Tuesday did not alter his resolution, nor did he accede to Liverpool's short speech calling on him not to proceed. Neither the Archbishop of Canterbury nor Eldon felt able to support the bill, which was duly rejected without division.²¹⁸

Why did the ministers fail to support Sidmouth? Partly there was reticence about proceeding with controversial legislation. Parliament tended to dislike too much conflict over private member bills. But Liverpool's comments also highlight why the nonconformist fury at the proposal so alarmed ministers. It threatened a united front between nonconformists and

²¹⁴ DRO, 152M/C/1811/OE: Perceval to Sidmouth, 19 May 1811.

²¹⁵ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, pp. 507-8.

²¹⁶ DRO, 152M/C/1811/OE: Liverpool to Sidmouth, 20 May 1811.

²¹⁷ Ibid., Sidmouth to Perceval and Sidmouth to Liverpool, both 20 May 1811.

²¹⁸ PD, 1811, xx, 233-55.

Catholics against the Test and Corporation Acts that might prove irresistible. Thereafter a policy of placating the Protestant concerns was pursued which would end in the repeal of the Stuart Five Mile and Conventicle Acts.

Perceval's suspicion of nonconformists did not dissipate overnight. When informed in December 1811 that the recently formed Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty did not aim at political power or to assail the established Church, he sceptically noted in the margin: 'These efforts possibly may not be necessary parts of the design, but they are necessary consequences of its success, and I do not see how it can be said that they are incompatible with the design itself'.²¹⁹ Following Sidmouth's defeat opponents of itineracy resorted to the law. Justices at Quarter Sessions interpreted the Toleration Act more strictly than hitherto, refusing to administer oaths and issue licences 'except [to] ordained ministers of separate congregations'. Consequently, thousands of Methodists were exposed to fines under the Conventicle Act. This amounted to an attack on the religious toleration that Dissenters had enjoyed since 1689 and Methodists throughout their existence, leading to the complaint that 'the late conduct of the Magistrates is subversive of the principles of the Constitution as established at The Revolution'.²²⁰ A lesser grievance was the King's Bench ruling that Methodist and Dissenting meeting houses were liable for poor-rates.²²¹ Perceval was contacted by John Wilks in December 1811, representing the mainly Dissenter focused Protestant Society. Subsequently the Wesleyans, Joseph Butterworth and Thomas Allan, also lobbied. The latter were astute choices given their anti-Catholic sentiments. Butterworth was a London Methodist perturbed at the supposedly sinister doings of priests and Jesuits, whilst Thomas Allan produced two anti-Catholic Emancipation pamphlets in 1813.²²² Perceval also

²¹⁹ BL, Add MS 38246, fo. 341: John Wilks to Perceval, 6 Dec. 1811.

²²⁰ John Rylands Library, MAW MS5/3 fo. 68: 'Hints for conversation with Mr Perceval'.

²²¹ BL, Add MS 38246, fo. 341-2: Wilks to Perceval, 6 Dec. 1811; Add MS 38247, fo. 50-7: Wilks to Perceval, 31 Jan. 1812.

²²² Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, pp. 125-8

communicated with William Smith and remained susceptible to Wilberforce's influence.²²³ Perceval's response to these concerns was to arrange meetings, in December 1811 and February 1812. Renewed correspondence occurred in April. Sidmouth, now in the cabinet, was among those government ministers consulted before Perceval replied.²²⁴ Given that there were cases pending in the King's Bench, Perceval suggested waiting until judgement had been given. Meanwhile he 'received us very politely, showed us great courtesy and kindness,' disclaimed persecution,²²⁵ and clarified that only clergymen or clerical schoolmasters should be exempt from civil and military duties. He reckoned dissenting chapels 'a subject of very inferior importance'; and at least legally the equivalent of Anglican chapels. But if that proved incorrect Perceval wrote that 'I should be very ready to propose that the Law ... be altered.'²²⁶ The King's Bench delivered its judgement on 5 May 1812. The 'ultimate decision was postponed', but Pellatt and Wilks informed Perceval that Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough was 'so hostile to the eventual success of the Dissenters that they cannot but expect final defeat in the Courts of Law'. Therefore, they solicited a meeting with Perceval and warned him that Whitbread would introduce a motion on the subject. This pressure was augmented by Butterworth and Allan.²²⁷ On the afternoon of 11 May 1812 the nonconformist lobbyists met with Perceval and secured his acceptance of a bill to reaffirm their legal protections. Two hours later Perceval was assassinated, throwing the nonconformist campaign into disorder.²²⁸ Subsequently, Liverpool agreed to carry through a new toleration act, modelled on that Allan had drafted before Perceval's assassination. This

²²³ Davies, *Dissent in Politics*, p. 169.

²²⁴ DRO, 152M/C/1812/OZ: Perceval to Sidmouth, 7 Apr. 1812.

²²⁵ R. Treffry, *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson* (London, 1840), pp. 232-3; John Rylands Library, MAW MS5/3/67 Allan to Mr. Robinson, 3 Mar. 1812.

²²⁶ BL, Add MS 38247, fo. 165: Perceval to T. Pellatt and John Wilks, 10 Apr. 1812.

²²⁷ BL, Add MS 38247, fo. 201: Pellatt and Wilks to Perceval, 5 May 1812; fo. 247: Butterworth to Perceval, 8 May 1812; fo. 248: Allan to Perceval, 9 May 1812.

²²⁸ John Rylands Library, MAW MS5/1, fo. 43: J. Barber to Joseph Dutton, 12 May 1812; BL, Add MS 38248, fo. 37: Pellatt and Wilks to Lord Liverpool, 11 June 1812.

repealed the Five Mile Act and the Conventicle Act, obliged magistrates to administer oaths, and reaffirmed the exemptions from civil and military duties for clergymen and schoolmasters.

What influenced the government's conciliatory approach in 1811-12? Chiefly it was the establishmentarian concern that nonconformists would ally with Catholics. This explains why Perceval shifted from hostility to acquiescence. The government's strategy of separating Protestant nonconformists from Catholics did, moreover, appear successful. Eldon wrote in late March 1812 that 'Some of the Dissenters are writings against the Papistes, and publishing dissuasives against making cause with them'.²²⁹ John Pytches noted the hostility against Catholic Emancipation in Suffolk, and that 'Even among the Dissenters there is prevailing apathy'.²³⁰ Orangeman Lord Kenyon recognized the need to reconcile Dissenters over the Catholic Question, despite declaring that 'The increasing prevalence of Dissent is a sad National evil'.²³¹ When forced to choose between tighter measures against Dissenters, or buttressing the bulwarks against Catholic Emancipation, the Pittites opted for the latter. Perceval's opposition to wider concessions to nonconformists occurred when they potentially impaired the established Church. While he considered Dissent a regrettable problem, his preferred solution was revitalising the Church of England.

Conclusion

Perceval's hostility to Catholic claims rested on two pillars. The first pillar was Perceval's religious beliefs, including biblical prophecy, the role of Providence, and Catholicism's 'idolatry'. This distinguished him from other Pittites, who either eventually supported

²²⁹ Twiss, *Lord Chancellor Eldon*, ii, p. 193.

²³⁰ BL, Add MS 38247, fo. 134: John Pytches to Perceval, 10 Mar. 1812.

²³¹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, Bundle G.39: Lord Kenyon to Perceval, 27 Apr. 1812.

Catholic claims, or founded their opposition on expediency or secular objections. The link between Perceval's ideas and his political views was disputed by Ian Bradley in his influential 1974 DPhil.²³² This chapter has shown this connection was significant. Privately Perceval's piety added a theological undergirding to his public pronouncements, explaining his forceful criticism of Maynooth and resistance to paying Catholic priests, again adding greater nuance to our understanding of anti-Catholic Pittism. Secondly, Perceval was fervently committed to the established Church. It caused him to resist tithe reform, in contrast to other Pittites. It underpinned his opposition to nonconformist claims and his lukewarm attitude towards the Church of Scotland. This supports the argument of the preceding chapters that Perceval was first and foremost an Anglican prime minister. Not only does this illuminate the differences amongst the Pittites over their attitudes towards non-Anglican Christianity, but it also explains the changing policies towards nonconformists in 1811-12. Ultimately, resisting Catholic claims was more important than weakening existing nonconformist privileges.

²³² I. Bradley, 'The Politics of Godliness: Evangelicals in Parliament 1784-1832' (Oxford Univ. DPhil thesis, 1974), pp. 62-3.

Chapter 4: Guided by a Mighty Hand? Economic Policy and its influences under Spencer Perceval

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Pittite economic policies during the Napoleonic Wars. Consequently, it engages with historiographical debates over the influence of religious beliefs on socioeconomic policies in this period, a subject of growing scholarship over the last four decades. But this scholarship has invariably concentrated on the post-1815 epoch. Particularly influential has been Boyd Hilton's thesis that religious temperament – particularly 'moderate' evangelical ideas of a mechanical and pessimistic worldview – nurtured support for laissez-faire policies during the post-war era. He briefly interpreted Perceval as presaging the interventionist 'extreme' evangelical approach later pursued by followers of the millenarian Edward Irving.¹ Whilst Hilton stressed that the influence of 'Christian Political Economy' primarily came from Thomas Chalmers, Anthony Waterman stressed a continuing and growing influence from Malthus through William Paley (in his 1802 book *Natural Theology*) and John Bird Sumner to Chalmers and the Oriel Noetics, principally Edward Copleston and Richard Whateley. Excepting Malthus and Paley, Waterman's focus is mainly on the post-1816 era, arguing that Malthus's ideas became theologically palatable because of Sumner's *Treatise on the Records of Creation*.² Aspects of

¹ B. Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-30* (Oxford, 1977); idem, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1988), p. 219; idem, *A mad, bad and dangerous people? England 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006).

² A. Waterman, *Revolution, Economics & Religion: Christian Political Economy 1798-1833* (Cambridge, 1991).

Waterman's interpretation has also been challenged, for example Moore and White have questioned whether Copleston had much influence over Peel.³

Brian Young and Peter Mandler have argued that historians of economic thought often concentrate on a few canonical thinkers.⁴ Numerous individuals wrote on 'political economy' throughout the Napoleonic Wars, yet the influence of political economy has been under-emphasised compared to earlier and later periods. For the 1780s a subtle picture of different understandings of 'free trade' for the 1785 Irish commercial controversy has been posited.⁵ Bernard Semmel has detailed Josiah Tucker's unacknowledged impact on Pitt's 1785 Irish commercial proposals.⁶ John Crowley has argued that Adam Smith swayed 'neo-mercantilists' such as George Chalmers, Lord Sheffield, and Charles Jenkinson to support commercial treaties and uphold the Navigation Acts.⁷ Smith's influence on Edmund Burke⁸ and Pitt the Younger has been downplayed.⁹ Donald Winch briefly suggested that Smith's lack of attention to the poor law and monetary questions diminished his influence in the

³ S. Rashid, 'Copleston, Peel, and Cash Payments', *HPE*, 15 (1983), pp. 249-59; G. Moore and M. White, 'Placing William Forster Lloyd in Context', unpublished paper (2009), p. 22, accessed 11 Jul. 2016 at http://www.hetsa.org.au/hetsa2009/conference_papers/14.%20Gregory%20Moore%20and%20Michael%20V.%20White%20Placing%20william%20Forster%20lloyd%20in%20Context.pdf.

⁴ B. Young, 'Christianity, Commerce and the Canon: Josiah Tucker and Richard Woodward on Political Economy', *History of European Ideas*, 22 (1996), pp. 385-400; P. Mandler, 'After Adam Smith: A Century of Transformation in Politics and Political Economy', by Murray Milgate and Shannon C. Stimson, *Victorian Studies*, 53 (2011), pp. 320-1.

⁵ J. Livesey, 'Free Trade and Empire in the Anglo-Irish Commercial Propositions of 1785', *Journal of British Studies*, 52 (2013), pp. 103-27.

⁶ B. Semmel, 'The Hume-Tucker Debate and Pitt's Trade Proposals', *The Economic Journal*, 75 (1965), pp. 759-70.

⁷ J. Crowley, 'Neo-Mercantilism and *The Wealth of Nations*: British Commercial Policy after the American Revolution', *HJ*, 33 (1990), pp. 339-60.

⁸ D. Winch, 'The Burke-Smith Problem and Late Eighteenth-Century Political and Economic Thought', *HJ*, 28 (1985), pp. 231-47.

⁹ J. Ehrman, *The British Government and Commercial Negotiations with Europe 1783-1793* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 48-9, 177-80.

1800s.¹⁰ Błażej Szpakowicz concluded, through examining mercantile pamphlets, that political economy made limited headway among the middling classes during the war era.¹¹ Several articles have considered Adam Smith's influence before 1800.¹² Yet Smith's sway in 1803-15 remains under-examined. Almost a century since Jacob Hollander suggested that economics' influence grew in the second half of the Napoleonic Wars,¹³ attention has mainly fixed on the *Edinburgh Review* coterie educated by Dugald Stewart.¹⁴ Examining the post-1815 era, Barry Gordon and Frank Fetter have published on the role of political economists in Parliament.¹⁵ These complement Hilton's, and Anna Gambles' work, which rehabilitated from allegations of self-interest and reaction the economic ideas of conservative thinkers,¹⁶ presaging renewed examination of conservative attitudes towards economics after Waterloo.¹⁷

This chapter therefore endeavours to bridge this chronological gap in the historiography. It begins by arguing that Perceval's Anglicanism caused him to support a

¹⁰ D. Winch, 'Science and the Legislator: Adam Smith and After', *The Economic Journal*, 93 (1983), p. 513.

¹¹ B. Szpakowicz, 'British Trade, Political Economy and Commercial Policy towards the United States, 1783-1815', (Cambridge Univ. PhD thesis, 2012), p. 47.

¹² K. Willis, 'The Role in Parliament of the Economic Ideas of Adam Smith, 1776-1800', *HPE*, 11 (1979), pp. 505-44; S. Rashid, 'Adam Smith's Rise to Fame: A Reexamination of the Evidence', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 23 (1982), p. 64-85; R. Teichgraeber, 'Less Abused than I had Reason to Expect': The Reception of The Wealth of Nations in Britain, 1776-90', *HJ*, 30 (1987), pp. 337-66.

¹³ J. Hollander, 'The Economist's Spiral', *The American Economic Review*, 12 (1922), pp. 4-6.

¹⁴ B. Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: The Edinburgh Review 1802-1832* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 2-8, 46-70, 117-33.

¹⁵ B. Gordon, *Political Economy in Parliament, 1819-1823* (London, 1976); idem, *Economic Doctrine and Tory Liberalism 1824-1830* (London, 1979); F. Fetter, *The Economist in Parliament, 1780-1868* (Durham, NC, 1980).

¹⁶ A. Gambles, *Protection and Politics: Conservative Economic Discourse, 1815-1852* (Woodbridge, 1999).

¹⁷ E. Rothschild, 'Adam Smith and Conservative Economics', *Economic History Review*, 45 (1992), pp. 74-96; D. Eastwood, 'Tories and Markets: Britain 1800-1850', in M. Bevir & F. Trentmann (eds.), *Markets in Historical Contexts: Ideas and Politics in the Modern World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 70-89; M. Taylor, 'Conservative Political Economy and the Problem of Colonial Slavery, 1823-1833', *HJ*, 57 (2014), pp. 973-85.

minimum stipend for curates, whilst opposing cotton-weavers petitioning for similar relief. This exception to the normal rules of supply-and-demand highlights how opponents of *laissez-faire* policies were increasingly accepting its principles whilst advocating exceptions to those principles. The next section scrutinises how far Pittite policies in 1807-12 persisted with the mercantilist policies of the earlier Hanoverian state; or whether they adopted the non-interventionism advocated by classical and 'Christian' political economists. It argues that the Pittites adopted a mixed approach, championing the established colonial system alongside supporting non-intervention in other areas. The ideas of Christian political economists, as defined by Waterman, had limited or no influence, with Malthus's being vehemently condemned by Perceval. The most likely intellectual influences over government policy were the political arithmetician Henry Beeke, and the posthumous Adam Smith. These issues are further examined in two case studies, on food supplies, and the bullion debates. The first case study on food supplies, a neglected topic, contends that the Pittites adopted a more *laissez-faire* strategy than Pitt had, but that this was grounded on experience, rather than ideology. It did not prevent the prohibition of using corn in distilleries, which occasioned considerable debate. The second case study argues that the bullion question entailed debates both over the applicability and the principles of political economy. It also represented an early dividing line between Huskisson and Canning – forerunners of the liberal Tory, pro-bullion, position adopted post-war – and the government, whose anti-bullionism presaged later high Tory resistance. The chapter therefore demonstrates that this period was one of important transition in Pittite approaches to economic theory and policy, and stresses how these policies and debates foreshadowed and influenced post-war policies.

Religion at Work: Curates and Cotton-Weavers

In 1834 the hand-loom weavers' representative Richard Needham informed a Commons select committee that, in 1808, Perceval had suggested that major Mancunian manufacturers should meet to consent to an 18s per hundredweight minimum wage, 'and if small manufacturers who afterwards competed with them entered into competition to run the prices down, he would in the ensuing session of Parliament pass those resolutions into a law'.¹⁸ The weavers had been championed by Vice-President of the Board of Trade George Rose, an admirer of the Spitalfields Acts which regulated silk-weavers' wages in East London.¹⁹ However, major manufacturers refused to co-operate and the subsequent minimum wage bill was rejected. Perceval was among those opposing it, stating that it 'could do no good, and might do a great deal of harm', and would reduce employment 'because only the best workmen would be retained'.²⁰ Although three hundred Manchester manufacturers did subsequently agree to a twenty per cent increase, this quickly proved unsatisfactory.²¹ Perceval subsequently opposed similar petitions in 1809 and 1811.²²

Perceval's reluctant opposition starkly contrasts with his advocacy from 1805 to 1808 of a minimum stipend for curates. His 1805 bill proposed stipends worth a fifth of their living's value, where the value exceeded £400. The latter restriction was removed in the 1806 bill, and reinstated in 1808, being combined with a maximum curate stipend of £250. These efforts ended in defeat. His proposals were criticised for interfering in labour relations

¹⁸ *Report from Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers' Petition: with Minutes of Evidence, and Index* (1834), p. 425. I am very grateful to Joanna Innes for pointing out this reference to me.

¹⁹ J. Innes, 'Regulating Wages in Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century England: Arguments in Context', in P. Gauci (ed.), *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 203, 211-12.

²⁰ *PD*, 1808, xi, 427-8.

²¹ *The Sun* (3 June 1808), p. 3; (11 June 1808), p. 3.

²² *PD*, 1809, xii, 1051-3; 1811, xx, 431-2.

between curates and incumbents. They directly conflicted with both Smith and Malthus. Malthus wrote ‘that the attempts of the legislature to raise the price of curates had always been ineffectual, on account of the cheap and abundant supply of them, occasioned by the bounties given to young persons educated for the church at the universities’.²³ To clerical writers, both before and after Perceval, nobler concerns necessitated interdicting the normal workings of supply-and-demand. Samuel Horsley, the high-Church Bishop of St David’s, declared in 1788:

That the labourer should be worthy of his hire, is a maxim of such wisdom and authority, that I should have felt but little satisfaction in my late regulations for augmenting the stipends of the curates, throughout my diocese, had I not a further view to the encouragement it would afford to their better education.²⁴

Similarly, in 1823 the influential church-reform pamphleteer Richard Yates opined: ‘leave things to themselves and supply follows demand ... may be generally true, and yet not applicable to the peculiar circumstances of religion’.²⁵ Thus clergymen represented an exception to the general rule of a free market in labour. Perceval articulated this in his 1808 pamphlet:

The principle in political economy which is so wise, viz. that things should be permitted to find their own level; that the price of labour should be left to be settled between the labourer and his master the merchant and his clerk, the

²³ *The Works of Thomas Robert Malthus*, eds. D. Souden and E. Wrigley (6 vols., London, 1986), iv, p. 12; *WN*, i, pp. 163-4.

²⁴ F. Mather, *High Church Prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) and the Caroline Tradition in the Later Georgian Church* (Oxford, 1992), p. 175.

²⁵ R. Yates, *Patronage of the Church of England* (London, 1823) p. 22.

manufacturer and his journeymen, is wholly inapplicable to such a subject as this; is wholly inapplicable to any subject where true policy requires that some object, connected with, or arising out of that subject, should be protected, to which it is not the personal interest of the contracting parties to attend. The Curate's interest undoubtedly is to get as large a compensation as he can for his labour, whereby to support his family and himself; but it is his interest, if he cannot get what would be sufficient for his decent maintenance, to get what he can; and to be content with less than enough, rather than with none at all. The Rector's interest ... in the sense in which that word applies in reference to the principle of political economy ... such pecuniary interest of the Rector looks only to getting the duty performed at as little expence to himself as he can. But true policy, and the interest of the public, require that it should be done in such a manner as that the reverence and respect due to the character of the officiating Minister of the Church may be supported, and the most beneficial effect may be produced by the proper performance of his duties. The interest therefore of the public it is, which, unless the Law interferes by its regulations to protect, may possibly be neglected altogether, and would certainly be neglected, in any case where the Rector should be so unprincipled as to conduct himself only upon these mercantile, economical considerations which, the argument I am now combatting, supposes might be satisfactorily relied on.²⁶

A staunch commitment to upholding the established Church caused Perceval to advocate the curates bills. Perceval's position has a fourfold significance. First, it

²⁶ S. Perceval, *Copy of a Letter to the Revd. Dr. Mansel, Master of Trinity College Cambridge on the Subject of the Curates Bill* (London, 1808), pp. 24-5.

demonstrates his Anglican credentials, with the overarching importance of the established Church trumping the normal laws of supply-and-demand. Secondly, he happily contradicted the two foremost political economists of the time, Smith and Malthus. Perceval distinguished between the public and private interest of the clerics, and the conflict between the rector's duty and interest. He was joined in advocating the curates bill by other Pittites, including Pitt²⁷ and Castlereagh,²⁸ and the legislation was enacted in 1813 by Harrowby and Liverpool.²⁹ Thirdly, Perceval's initial acknowledgement of supply-and-demand, and his opposition to compelling adoption of the minimum wage, paints a different picture from Hilton's vision of him as an extreme proto-Irvingite evangelical hostile to the free market.³⁰ Lastly, Perceval's 'exception to the rule' language echoed other defenders of 'interventionist' policies. They too asserted that their cases were an exception to otherwise acceptable 'principles'. This applied to defending the East India Company's monopoly,³¹ encouraging domestic timber growth,³² or granting exchequer bills to distressed merchants. Lord Grenville became exasperated by this approach: 'the noble lords opposite were continually admitting the justice and expediency of general principles, but ... when they assented most to the justice of such principles, it was the precise time when they were violating them most in their practice.'³³ Grenville was a fervent supporter of political economy, engaging critically with Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo during his post-war perusal of their tomes.³⁴ Horner, who

²⁷ LPL, MSS 2101, fo: 90: Notebook of Beilby Porteus, entry 20 Apr. 1805.

²⁸ *PD*, 1806, vi, 926-7.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 1813, xxv, 392-3.

³⁰ Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, p. 219.

³¹ NRS, GD23/6/746/11: Charles Grant to the Provost of Inverness, 25 Apr. 1812; *PD*, xxv, 1813, 677-8.

³² D. Stewart, *Lectures on Political Economy*, ed. W. Hamilton (2 vols., London, 1855), ii, pp. 25-7, 41-7.

³³ *PD*, 1811, xix, 533.

³⁴ D. Allan, *Making British Culture: English Readers and the Scottish Enlightenment* (New York, 2008), pp. 193-8, 273; J. Pullen, 'Lord Grenville's Manuscript Notes on Malthus', *HPE*, 19 (1987), pp. 217-37; 'Three Unpublished Letters by David Ricardo', ed. A. Heertje, *HPE*, 23 (1991), pp. 519-26.

shared his enthusiasm, claimed that Grenville considered ‘the *Wealth of Nations* is Gospel and ought to be law’.³⁵ Other non-Pittites were less enamoured. Fox praised Lauderdale’s *Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Public Wealth* (1804) chiefly for its Greek quotations and was privately sceptical about political economy,³⁶ although he had supported Pitt against calls for greater government intrusion in the bread market.³⁷ Wilberforce quoted Smith in the 1790s more than any other politician, but nonetheless criticised his ethics, and lamented the absence of religion from Lauderdale’s work.³⁸ This was the context within which Pittite politicians engaged with economic ideas.

Defining Pittite economic policy

The economic policies of the Portland and Perceval administrations defy easy definition. From Disraeli onwards they were portrayed as reactionary high Tories, unlike Pitt, the disciple of Lord Shelburne and Adam Smith. Contemporaneously the ministries were accused of being mercantilists, wedded to archaic nostrums.³⁹ Conversely the Irish MP William Tighe spoke in 1812 ‘of the ingenious doctrines of the French economists, towards which ministers were now beginning to turn so favourable an eye’,⁴⁰ which suggested that Perceval’s ministry aligned with physiocrat ideas that privileged agriculture. Subsequently, the war-time Pittite ministries have been interpreted by Cookson as pursuing proto-liberal Tory policies,

³⁵ *The Horner Papers*, eds. K Bourne and W. Bankes-Taylor (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 303.

³⁶ *Memorials and correspondence of Fox* ed. J. Russell (4 vols., London, 1853-7) iv, p. 36; Colchester, ii, p. 71.

³⁷ W. Debrett, *Parliamentary Register* (45 vols., London, 1782-96), xliii, 73.

³⁸ Willis, ‘Role in Parliament’, pp. 509-10; R. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (5 vols., London), i, p. 387; Bodleian, MS Wilberforce c.47, f. 84-6: Lauderdale to Wilberforce, nd.

³⁹ *The Monthly Review*, 64 (1811), pp. 11-12, 109, 442; W. Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers* (4 vols., London, 1852-4), i, p. 133.

⁴⁰ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 1002.

particularly as regards manufacturing.⁴¹ Contrastingly, Hilton described Perceval as closer to the interventionist 'extreme' version of Evangelicalism.⁴²

In determining whether the Pittite ministries of 1807-12 were 'mercantilist' or laissez-faire governments, their policies provide a smorgasbord of potential examples, supporting either interpretation. They ended the East India Company's, and London's, monopolies on Indian trade. They pursued, like Pitt in the 1780, commercial treaties with Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Sicily. Yet Perceval also introduced protectionist duties for timber, foreign linens, and 'pearl and pot ashes' (and unsuccessfully proposed them on cotton wool).⁴³ Responding to the Waterford merchant Henry Hunt's request to import Swedish iron and steel, Perceval cited the success of British iron under protection.⁴⁴ In 1808 prohibitory duties had been imposed on foreign copper; and Perceval was prepared to ensure that the Navy only purchased British copper for coating her ships.⁴⁵ This followed a protectionist tradition dating back to the Glorious Revolution.⁴⁶

The Pittites also defended the established navigation acts and colonial trade system. Canning, Bathurst, and Vansittart did occasionally express doubts over excluding America from the Caribbean.⁴⁷ However, the Pittites hotly resisted the Talents' proposals in 1806 to make Tortola a free port and conclude a commercial settlement with America. Castlereagh challenged the theoretical argument against the Navigation Laws:

⁴¹ J. Cookson, 'British Society and the French Wars, 1793-1815', *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 31 (1985), pp. 200-1.

⁴² Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp. 218-19.

⁴³ CPW, vii, p. 357; PD, 1811, xx, 218, 274-8, 305-7.

⁴⁴ PRONI, D562/2105: Perceval to Foster, 30 Oct. 1810.

⁴⁵ HMC Bathurst p. 147; BL, Add MS 45036 f. 119: Perceval to Charles Yorke 19 Dec. 1811; Holland (Perceval) Papers F.76: Yorke to Perceval, 21 Dec. 1811; F.77: Memorandum on the copper trade by V. B. Thompson, 21 Dec. 1811.

⁴⁶ R. Davis, 'The Rise of Protection in England, 1689-1786', *Economic History Review*, 19 (1966), pp. 306-17.

⁴⁷ BL, Add MS 89143/1/12/1: Canning to Perceval, 9 Nov. 1807; BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 162: Bathurst to Perceval, 24 Aug. 1808; *British Colonial Developments 1774-1834: Select Documents*, eds. V. Harlow and F. Madden (Oxford, 1953), p. 287.

I know it has been the fashion in modern times to deny its restrictions upon commerce. The economists laugh at the notion of compelling your commerce to be carried in native shipping, if it can be carried by the shipping of other states on better times. But those who have attentively studied the rise of this nation into greatness and security, will not hesitate to attribute it, under Providence, to its early and provident determination to carry forward its means of strength and power, with all those circumstances of wealth and splendour which must ever have the effect of exciting jealousy and creating enemies. It has been the policy of those laws to require our commerce and our marine to grow up together. This principle of wholesome restraint has caused them to rise and flourish together, and they have alternately, as cause and effect, perhaps, accelerated each other's progress.⁴⁸

In 1809, when Bathurst suggested opening Caribbean ports to American shipping, and Perceval expressed sympathy for the idea, Liverpool and Eldon vigorously opposed it, anticipating Liverpool's resistance in 1816 to similar concessions to America.⁴⁹ Similarly, Huskisson responded in June 1809 to the radical MP Gwyllym Wardle's claim that bounties were inconsistent 'with the established principles of political economy', by arguing that bounties were 'drawbacks and encouragements to our manufactures, and some of our most essential branches of national industry'. Rose supported him, asserting that without the bounty thirty-thousand Spitalfields weavers would be unemployed in 'the first fortnight'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *PD*, 1806, vii, 982.

⁴⁹ *HMC Bathurst*, p. 89; *Colonial Developments*, pp. 286-7.

⁵⁰ *PD*, 1809, xiv, 1097, 1122, 1128, 1130.

Yet Castlereagh's direct confrontation of non-intervention principles showed an appreciation of the need to acknowledge this alternative approach. In other areas these principles were endorsed. In 1802 Liverpool (as Lord Hawkesbury) dismissed commercial treaties as unnecessary.⁵¹ Though the government issued exchequer bills in 1811, justified by the emergency situation,⁵² Liverpool had in 1803 doubted the prudence of the 1793 issuing of exchequer bills, foreshadowing his opposition to them in 1826.⁵³ Liverpool opposed a minimum wage for framework-knitters in July 1812 with a strong championing of 'laissez faire' principles.⁵⁴ The temper of the times was moving that way. In 1808 Perceval objected to Irish linen drapers' proposal to ban Irish flax exports to England, because 'It would not only be bad on principle, but would procure no important advantage for the moment'.⁵⁵ As we shall see with corn, pragmatic policies were often explained with bold statements of principle.

Influence of political economists

Let us now consider the sway exercised by political economists, both 'classical' and 'Christian', over the Pittites during the Napoleonic Wars. This complements scholarship on their pre- and post-war influence, and the impact of Dugald Stewart on Whigs like Brougham and Horner. When considering the influence of different political economists Boyd Hilton provides the starting candidates: the 'Christian' political economists, namely Thomas Chalmers and the Oriel Noetics. Did they influence the Pittites? Richard Whateley was too young, being elected a fellow of Oriel in 1811. Edward Copleston had produced a prize-

⁵¹ *The Times* (28 Apr. 1802), p. 2.

⁵² *PD*, 1811, xix, 531, 538.

⁵³ *PD*, 1803, i, 313-4; Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, pp. 224-31.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1812, xxiii, 1249.

⁵⁵ PRONI, D562/2119: Perceval to Foster, 23 Nov. 1808.

winning essay in 1796 on agriculture, which has received little previous attention.⁵⁶ The essay upheld agriculture's moral superiority over fickle and potentially corrupting commerce. Flourishing agriculture required legislators only to guarantee property and ensure stability. Copleston applauded the dismantling of 'those pernicious reliques of the Feudal System', and scrutiny of 'lesser evils' such as the game laws.⁵⁷ The first half, however, bears similarities to ideas found earlier in the eighteenth century in non-specialist writings, such as Samuel Johnson's,⁵⁸ whilst the second half echoes the Scottish Enlightenment. Copleston's interest in political economy persisted. He doubted its utility for undergraduates, yet cited Henry Beeke's lectures on political economy to refute claims that the subject was unknown at Oxford.⁵⁹ But although probably sympathetic to resuming cash payments, Copleston did not contribute to the bullion debates of 1810-11 as he would in 1819. Furthermore, he supported Grenville during the chancellorship election of 1809.⁶⁰ Therefore his was not a guiding hand for the war-time Pittites.

Likewise, Thomas Chalmers' unnoticed pamphlet on the value of commerce in 1808 preceded his subsequent evangelical experience. Although Anthony Waterman has emphasised Chalmers' contribution to political economy, notably to ideas of national security,⁶¹ Chalmers' pamphlet was lost amid the myriad of contributions to the debate over commerce and agriculture. Triggered by William Spence's pamphlet of 1808, *Britain Independent of Commerce*, this debate drew in William Cobbett, Edward Wakefield, Arthur

⁵⁶ Waterman, *Revolution, Economics and Religion*, pp. 184, 191.

⁵⁷ E. Copleston, *Essay on Agriculture* (Oxford, 1796).

⁵⁸ *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, Volume X: Political Writings*, ed. D. Greene (London, 1977), pp. 116-25.

⁵⁹ E. Copleston, *A Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review Against Oxford* (Oxford, 1810), pp. 154, 171-5.

⁶⁰ Rashid, 'Copleston, Peel, and Cash Payments', p. 251.

⁶¹ A. Waterman, 'The Canonical Classical Model of Political Economy' in 1808, as Viewed from 1825: Thomas Chalmers on the 'National Resources', *HPE*, 23 (1991), pp. 221-41; idem, 'National Security in Classical Political Economy: A Neglected Contribution', *HPE*, 25 (1993), pp. 739-44.

Young, James Mill and the political economist Robert Torrens.⁶² However, there is no evidence that any of these contributions swayed politicians in Whitehall. ‘Christian Political Economy’ did not have the same influence over politicians pre-1815 as it would post-1815, nor did the theoretical debates about the value of commerce.

What about the influence of Malthus and Ricardo, the foremost living ‘classical’ economists? They too exercised little sway over the Pittites. Malthus did influence opposition politicians, for example advising on the 1811 Population Bill at the behest of Francis Horner.⁶³ Pitt was also reputedly converted to Malthus’s ideas.⁶⁴ The anti-Malthus opprobrium of radicals and romantics has been well-documented.⁶⁵ What neither Waterman nor Malthus’s biographer, Patricia James, properly examined is how many senior politicians rejected Malthus’s ideas. Grenville queried Malthus’s vision of population inexorably pressing the limits of subsistence.⁶⁶ As for abolishing the Poor Laws, Malthus’s chief policy prescription, Davies Giddy was unique among parliamentarians in supporting abolition, and by 1812 had retreated to proposing uniform codification of the laws.⁶⁷ Despite Pitt’s views, therefore, front-bench Pittites continued to support the Poor Law. Castlereagh and Canning voiced their general endorsement,⁶⁸ and Sidmouth reportedly wanted them extended to

⁶² *Cobbett’s Weekly Political Register*, 13 (1808), pp. 288-303, 498-502, 690-6; T. Chalmers, *An Enquiry into the Extent and Stability of National Resources* (Edinburgh, 1808); J. Mill, *Commerce Defended: An Answer to the Arguments by which Mr. Spence, Mr. Cobbett, and others, have Attempted to Prove that Commerce is Not a Source of National Wealth* (London, 1808); R. Torrens, *The Economists Refuted, or, An Inquiry into the Nature and Extent of the Advantages Derived from Trade* (London, 1808).

⁶³ TNA, PRO 30/9/15, Box 2: Horner to Abbot, 25 Feb. 1811.

⁶⁴ James, *Population Malthus*, pp. 53, 91-2.

⁶⁵ A. Pyle (ed.), *Population: Contemporary Responses to Thomas Malthus* (Bristol, 1994).

⁶⁶ Pullen, ‘Lord Grenville’s Manuscript’, p. 227.

⁶⁷ *PD*, 1807, ix, 799; 1808, xi, 423; 1812, xxi, 1261.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1806, vi, 624-5, 1819, xl, 543-4.

Ireland.⁶⁹ George Rose had written against Malthus in 1805 and defended the Poor Laws.⁷⁰ Perceval therefore reflected a Pittite consensus by saying that the ‘code [of the Poor laws] ... contained a great deal of good, although, certainly with some alloy of evil’.⁷¹ His reasons were partially political, as articulated in July 1807:

He defended the principle of the poor-laws. However the system might be abused, as every large system must be liable to abuse, it was a proud characteristic of the nation, that charity was incorporated into the legislature. The poor of this country had consequently an interest in the maintenance of its constitution and independence, which the poor of no other country had.

Perceval’s criticisms extended to Malthus’s ideas. During a debate on granting a further £10,000 to Dr Jenner for his work on vaccinations Perceval launched a forceful attack upon Malthus’s economic thought. Moving the motion (later amended to £20,000) Perceval pre-empted a potential objection:

An objection might be made to the utility of the discovery, because it tended to increase population, but he should prefer the principles of practical humanity, in preserving life where it existed, to the encouragement of those checks mentioned by Mr. Malthus, whereby population might be kept down. If they were to go into a calculation of the number of lives that had been saved by the discovery, and the expence [*sic*] to the public spared by the diminution of the number of persons in

⁶⁹ *Sidmouth*, iii, p. 155.

⁷⁰ G. Rose, *Observations on the Poor Laws, and on the Management of the Poor, in Great Britain, Arising from a Consideration of the Returns, now before Parliament* (London, 1805), pp. 2-30.

⁷¹ *PD*, 1807, ix, 551.

the hospitals, they might have a mean of estimating the advantages of this important discovery.⁷²

Malthus had already denied opposing vaccinations in an appendix to the 1806 edition of his famous work on population.⁷³ Strikingly, after August 1807 Malthus's name vanished from parliamentary debates until 1813.⁷⁴ Perceval did allegedly criticise Malthus at a private dinner, as recorded by the Scottish barrister and diarist James Loch:

that if Malthus had not been so completely poo, pood [sic] by all, that it would have been a subject of serious consideration whether, he ought not to have been punished for so open an encouragement and recommendation of Sodomy as he held forth in his work in his work upon Population.⁷⁵

This anecdote was conveyed through William Adam, a political opponent of Perceval, from one of the diners, Manners Sutton, the son of the Primate and later Speaker of the House of Commons. It was clearly thought plausible. Perceval's hostility possibly derived from being the parent of numerous offspring. He welcomed the Property Tax of 1806 as lessening the burden of consumption taxes on 'the poor man of small income with a large family'.⁷⁶ Although therefore Pitt was reputedly converted to Malthus's ideas, the Pittites remained unconvinced, and Perceval was evidently hostile.

⁷² Ibid., 804, 1009.

⁷³ T.R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* 3rd edn (2 vols., London, 1806), ii, pp. 514, 556-9.

⁷⁴ *PD*, 1807, ix, 1136; 1813, xxvi, 447.

⁷⁵ NRS, GD268/830, fo. 11: Diary of James Loch, 23 Lincoln's Inn, London, 1 Feb. 1809.

⁷⁶ *PD*, 1806, vii, 53.

In 1819-22 David Ricardo became a useful champion of government policies on the Corn Laws and cash payments. Nonetheless he held radical ideas about constitutional questions. In 1810-11, when Ricardo first rose to prominence through his letters and then pamphlets on the bullion question, he had limited contact with politicians. His attempts to solicit support from Perceval through sending his latest works met with polite but unsupportive replies from Perceval's secretary.⁷⁷

Instead, among the Pittites the most influential living economic writer during the wars was the Revd Henry Beeke. Beeke appears incidentally in the existing literature,⁷⁸ with only two short articles by Salim Rashid concentrating on him.⁷⁹ Beeke shared certain similarities with Copleston, whom he knew, both being chaplains and fellows of Oriel College. Beeke next held the living of Upton Nervet in Berkshire, before becoming Regius Professor of History at Oxford University in October 1801. From 1802 Beeke incorporated political economy into his lectures, a practice also followed by William Smyth at Cambridge.⁸⁰ Beeke's influence derived from two sources. The lesser source was his published works. In 1798 he published a defence of the war against France.⁸¹ In 1800 he published an estimate of national income that shaped Addington's revisions to income tax.⁸² A greater source of influence was his correspondence with politicians. Rashid has credited him with originating in 1800 the idea of Giffen goods – a good whose consumption increases as its price rises.⁸³

⁷⁷ CUL, Add MS 7510/II/N1-3x: Ricardo to Perceval 2 Feb. 1810 and 27 July 1811; replies 5 Feb. 1810 and 2 Aug. 1811.

⁷⁸ Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp. 41-2.

⁷⁹ S. Rashid, 'The Beeke Good: A Note on the Origins of the "Giffen" Good', *HPE*, 11 (1979), pp. 606-7; Idem, 'The Scarcity of 1800: A Contemporary Account', *The Agricultural History Review*, 28 (1980), pp. 115-19.

⁸⁰ Idem, 'The Growth of Economic Studies at Cambridge: 1776-1860', *History of Education Quarterly*, 20 (1980), pp. 285-6.

⁸¹ H. Beeke, *Letter to a County Member, on the Means of securing a safe and honourable peace* (London, 1798).

⁸² Idem, *Observations on the Produce of the Income Tax: and on its Proportion to the Whole Income of Great Britain* (London, 1800).

⁸³ Rashid, 'The Beeke Good', pp. 606-7.

Beeke also advised Vansittart on the Poor Employment Act of 1817, which provided exchequer bills temporarily to fund public works.⁸⁴ His chief influence was therefore with Addington (later Lord Sidmouth) and Vansittart. Rose reported that during Addington's premiership he 'consigns everything to Mr Vansittart and he [Vansittart] to Doctor Beeke.'⁸⁵ Hence Beeke wrote a lengthy reply to Bentham over the latter's plan for annuity notes.⁸⁶ Beeke's letters to Addington show that he disagreed with the government's policy of Orders in Council.⁸⁷ However he also corresponded with Perceval's secretary, John Herries. Beeke can be described as a political arithmetician, eagerly assembling statistical information. In September 1807 he sent Herries a statistical account of the new Kingdom of Westphalia, and later proved a useful ally during the bullion debates.⁸⁸ Although Beeke's influence and contact with Perceval was limited compared to that with Sidmouth and Vansittart, he probably had the closest contact of any contemporary economic writer with senior Pittites.

Contrary to Donald Winch's claim, Adam Smith remained seen as the foremost economic thinker of the age.⁸⁹ Even Coleridge, who despised Smith, advised Thomas Poole to read him if he was interested in political economy.⁹⁰ Rose, another man generally seen as unsympathetic to laissez-faire nostrums, called Smith 'the highest of authorities in political economy'.⁹¹ Among politicians the primacy of Smith's influence was long-lasting. Readers

⁸⁴ M. Flinn, 'The Poor Employment Act of 1817', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 14 (1961), pp. 86-7.

⁸⁵ R. Thorne, 'Vansittart, Nicholas', *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820 Online*, accessed 31 Dec. 2015 at http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/vansittart-nicholas-1766-1851#footnote2_n3nieq2.

⁸⁶ J. Bowring, *Memoirs of Jeremy Bentham including Autobiographical Conversations and Correspondence* (11 vols., Edinburgh, 1843), x, pp. 369-71.

⁸⁷ DRO, 152M/C1807/OF12: Beeke to Sidmouth, 19 Sep. 1807; 152M/C1810/OZ: idem, 15 Jan. 1810.

⁸⁸ Beeke's correspondence with Herries: BL, Add MS 47415, fo. 1-40 *passim*: For Westphalia, fo. 21-3: Beeke to Herries, 26 Sep. 1807.

⁸⁹ Winch, 'Science and the Legislator', p. 513.

⁹⁰ *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71) ii, p. 799.

⁹¹ *PD*, 1811, xix, 837.

of Smith's works included those seeking practical advice,⁹² those particularly interested (such as Pitt or Grenville), and politicians less obviously engrossed in the subject. Hence Dudley Ryder read Smith whilst at Cambridge.⁹³ Pitt's admiration for Smith, and selective application of his thought, doubtless shaped how the Pittites interpreted Smith. Herries panegyricised Pitt as 'perhaps the most enlightened political economist of his time'.⁹⁴ This represented a shift from the attitudes of the 1790s, when, as Henry Cockburn recollected: 'The middle aged seemed to me to know little about the founder [Adam Smith] of the science [political economy], except that he had recently been a Commissioner of Customs and had written a sensible book'.⁹⁵ We should not exaggerate the shift in views, but even Perceval demonstrates that Smithian ideas were gaining traction.

Perceval never specifically referenced Smith, but showed familiarity with the non-interventionist notions that Smith was perceived to have propounded. These ideas, not exclusive to Smith, had clearly seeped into the language of debates. An early example is Perceval's draft speech for the Crown and Rolls debating society, which he belonged to as a young lawyer, on whether preference should be given to manufacturing or agriculture. His endorsement of Smith's ideas may have been a youthful enthusiasm subsequently retracted (though he avoided any clear partiality between different sectors of the economy); or a position taken for the sake of the debate. However, it demonstrates awareness of these ideas. Perceval's argument was:

⁹² Allan, *Making British Culture*, pp. 188-98.

⁹³ D. Ryder, *Autobiography of Dudley, 1st Earl of Harrowby. Together with Some Memoranda Written by Him as to Offers of High Office (privately printed, 1891)*, p. 10.

⁹⁴ J. Herries, *A Review of the Controversy respecting the High Price of Bullion and the State of our Currency* (London, 1811), p. 95.

⁹⁵ H. Cockburn, *Memorials of His Times* (Edinburgh, 1856), pp. 45-6.

that the general interest of the whole requires the utmost latitude of choice, & great liberality even to every member of the community, to employ his own industry & to direct his capital to the employment of the industry of others, without being detained on one hand by restrictions, or on the other by encouragements, but to be left merely to that direction of which he may conceive his own interest & to go the way which seems to him to promise the greatest reward for his industry.

Perceval then followed Smith in his idea of national wealth being based on the produce of labour, of the importance of increasing capital, and claiming that bounties were only needed ‘where the price of the goods brought to market is not sufft [sufficient] to replace the cost of bringing them together with the ordinary profits of stock’. Monopolies increased prices: ‘Therefore it must be the interest of a country to purchase all its articles of consumption as cheap as possible. If nothing is so detrimental to cheap purchasing as a monopoly, every thing which lessens the number in a market enables those who supply that market more easily to combine’. He concluded by explaining how manufacturing encouraged agriculture through providing a market for produce, land purchasers, order and good government.⁹⁶ Perceval’s other Crown and Rolls speeches echoed Smith’s criticisms of colonies and that ‘the advantage of the merchant, & the advantage of the Country are by no means synominous [sic]’.⁹⁷ This was perhaps a ‘debate speech’, not a sincere expression of his opinions. But Perceval’s early parliamentary speeches do show an aversion to monopolies. Defending the Assessed Taxes in January 1798 he raised the spectre of France, where ‘all merchandise had been seized into the hands of the Govt & the Government become the monopolist of their

⁹⁶ BL, Add MS 49179, fo. 28-32: draft speech on debate on manufacturing and agriculture.

⁹⁷ Ibid., fo. 9: draft speech on colonies.

remaining trade'.⁹⁸ More significantly, Perceval's resistance to intervention in the corn market in 1801 may have resulted from Smithian ideas. He supported abolishing the bread assize, adding that 'The way to produce competition in a trade was to have as few restraints as possible upon it: at present, such were the restraints thrown upon the baker, that it prevented people with capitals from entering into or continuing in it'. Removing restraints would 'make a baker a more important character ... if this branch of business was left free and unshackled, like any other, he saw no reason why the baker should not be as respectable a character as the brewer'. He did acknowledge that bread, being the 'daily food of man, and which must be had day by day' was unlike other articles 'upon which you could calculate an average, and which must in time find its own level'.⁹⁹

The significance of Perceval's views in 1801 has been severely neglected even by his biographers, who mentioned it without considering its wider context.¹⁰⁰ Yet his position presaged that he held in 1812. He went further than Pitt in resisting government intervention in the corn market. It testifies to the influence of non-interventionist ideas over the Pittites. It is doubly significant because Perceval was not, unlike Lord Grenville, avidly attached to the 'principles of political economy'. Instead he, and his fellow war-time Pittites, were Janus-like in their approach: sometimes looking backwards to the established mercantile policies of the Hanoverian state and disdaining the new political economists like Malthus and Ricardo, yet on other occasions sympathising with policies that were subsequently associated with 'classical' economics. Perceval was clearly not influenced by 'Christian Political Economy', but nor do his views fit Hilton's model of him as an interventionist 'extreme' evangelical.

⁹⁸ Ibid., fo. 128: draft speech for 2nd and later 3rd reading of Assessed Taxes Bill, 4 Jan. 1798.

⁹⁹ *PR(i)*, xvi, p. 373.

¹⁰⁰ S. Walpole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval* (2 vols., London, 1874), i, pp. 76-8; D. Gray, *Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister* (Manchester, 1963), p. 43.

Corn

On 3 August 1810 Perceval wrote to John Foster, ending with that habitual British subject, the weather:

The weather here for the last 3 weeks or month, has been so favorable [sic] that instead of a very bad year of produce with the prospect of which we were alarmed, we now look forward to a fair Crop of every thing but Hay. How are your Crops? Particularly your Potatoes and Oats? I trust we shall buy from you a great Quantity of the latter in the ensuing Season.¹⁰¹

The weather mattered to Hanoverian politicians because of its connection with the harvest. A poor crop could lead to social unrest and, as France showed, revolution. Ensuring sufficient food supplies was a hotly debated topic during the Napoleonic Wars. This section focuses on these debates, beginning by explaining the historiographical neglect of this period and arguing that there were significant debates about food supplies. It then considers the three key themes of these debates: the role of government, the clash of interests, and differences across Britain. First, it argues that the Pittites adopted a more laissez-faire approach than Pitt in 1795 and 1800-1. But this was owing to their assessment that interventionist policies had failed rather than a theoretical attachment to non-intervention. Secondly, it contends that the debates were primarily framed as a clash of interests, something ministers were keen to avoid lest they were construed as championing the colonial over the landed interest. It further argues that Britain's agricultural interest did not feel secure, and feared imports. Thirdly, ministers did, eventually, introduce a separate policy for Ireland, overcoming the argument that prohibiting corn-usage in distilleries (hereafter called prohibition) should be adopted

¹⁰¹ PRONI, D562/2092: Perceval to Foster, 3 Aug. 1810.

throughout the United Kingdom. This section will help correct an historiographical omission, helping to enhance our understanding of war-time Pittite economic, and consequently the experiences which influenced the post-war Pittites.

Food prices in 1808-9 and 1812 matched those of 1795 and 1800-1, and only the harvest of 1810 was truly satisfactory. The drafters of the 1804 Corn Laws had expected that prices would rarely exceed 66s. Instead prices consistently surpassed that level, causing licensed corn imports from France and Holland, the prohibition of corn-usage in distilleries, and exacerbated Irish and industrial discontent.¹⁰² Yet while Roger Wells has described the famines of 1795 and 1800-1, he acknowledged there is a lack of comparable scholarship for the later period.¹⁰³ A fruitful exception is the 1925 work of American historian William Galpin. Galpin was inspired by the First World War to consider whether Britain was similarly exposed to starvation during the Napoleonic Wars, though he acknowledged that he chiefly concentrated on the import trade, gave little coverage to Scotland and Ireland, and made only limited use of manuscript correspondence.¹⁰⁴ In 1963 Mancur Olson offered a direct comparison with the World Wars in *The Economics of Wartime Shortages*, though he mainly focused on Napoleon's decision to export food to Britain in 1809. The 1815 Corn Laws, once memorably described as 'one of the most naked pieces of class legislation in English history', have been reassessed by Boyd Hilton as an intelligible tilt at autarky by Liverpool's ministry.¹⁰⁵ But the preceding debates of 1807 to 1813 remain under-examined, for four possible reasons. First, Donald Barnes' seminal 1930 book on the Corn Laws contended that

¹⁰² Prices and harvest conditions taken from M. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 577-8, and W. Smart, *Economic Annals of the Nineteenth Century* (2 vols., London, 1910), i, pp. 125-334 *passim*.

¹⁰³ R. Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1803* (Gloucester, 1988), p. 335.

¹⁰⁴ W. Galpin, *The Grain Supply of England during the Napoleonic Period* (London, 1925), p. viii.

¹⁰⁵ R. Blake, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill* (London, 1970), p. 15; Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, pp. 3-28.

the laws were inoperable during the Napoleonic Wars,¹⁰⁶ causing historians to assume that no worthwhile debates occurred. The post-war debates on the Corn Laws, culminating in their abolition, have also distracted historians. Secondly, protectionists subsequently nurtured the idea of the conflict as an era of heroic agricultural expansion.¹⁰⁷ Certainly rhetoric foreshadowing the ‘dig-for-victory’ campaign was voiced. Sir John Sinclair in 1803 declared: ‘Let us not be satisfied with the liberation of Egypt, or the subjugation of Malta, but let us subdue Finchley Common; let us conquer Hounslow Heath, let us compel Epping Forest to submit to the yoke of improvement’.¹⁰⁸ A pessimistic version of this interpretation stresses increasing rents and profits for landowners, their complacent prosperity being shattered by the price crash of 1814. Thirdly, E. P. Thompson fixed the move from moral economy to laissez-faire on the years 1795 and 1800-1.¹⁰⁹ Hence the later shortages have been overshadowed by the diverse topic of an ensuing Luddism. Finally, debates inside and outside parliament were not framed around the corn laws but distillery bills. This annual, temporary legislation prohibited the use of corn, usually poor-quality barley, in distilleries, and instead granted a substitute monopoly to sugar. The laws were construed as seeking to relieve the sugar interest, whose prices had collapsed, either because their greed had glutted the market, or because Napoleon’s closure of European markets caused an excess of sugar in Britain. Yet the government justified prohibition because it saved barley otherwise used in distilleries for human consumption. This section also widens our understanding of events by

¹⁰⁶ D. Barnes, *A History of the English Corn Laws from 1660 to 1846* (London, 1930). Examples of omission of the post-1801 shortages are: W. Minchinton, ‘Agricultural Returns and the Government during the Napoleonic Wars’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 1 (1953), pp. 29-43, and J. Tann, ‘Co-Operate Corn Milling: Self-Help during the Grain Crises of the Napoleonic Wars’, *ibid.*, 28 (1980), pp. 45-57.

¹⁰⁷ H. Parnell, *The Substance of the Speeches of Sir H. Parnell, Bart. in the House of Commons, with Additional Observations on the Corn Laws* 2nd edn (London, 1814), p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ J. Sinclair, *Memoirs of the Life and Works of Sir John Sinclair, Bart* (2 vols., London, 1837), ii, p. 111.

¹⁰⁹ E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), pp. 249-52, 279-80.

including Scotland and Ireland, and draws on a wider array of manuscript sources than Galpin did, including papers in Northern Ireland.

Let us now scrutinise the three main themes of these debates: government intervention, the clash of interests, and differing approaches across Britain. In November 1807, contemplating a shortage in Scotland but abundance in London, Hawkesbury wrote to Arthur Wellesley that

it would be very inexpedient to take any measures on the part of government on such a subject without further inquiry ... I have had formerly as chairman of the Corn Committee in the House of Commons some experience on subjects of this nature, and I feel very strongly the difficulties which arise from any interference of government in the corn trade. When once they begin, the ordinary course of trade is deranged, and they never know where they can or ought to stop. Such interference, may, however, I admit, be necessary, but it should not be resorted to while there exists any hopes of avoiding it.¹¹⁰

Hawkesbury had previously supervised Parliamentary legislation which restricted flour-usage in baking and established the London Flour and Bread Company. To consider how governments acted in 1807 to 1812 we must recollect the measures previously taken by Pitt's government. It had prohibited corn-usage in distilleries, hair powder and starch, and corn exports. It introduced bounties on imported food ranging from rice to Swedish herrings.¹¹¹ They passed the 'Making of Bread Act' in 1800 to regulate the composition of bread, against Londoners' predilection for white-flour bread. Hawkesbury's London Flour and Bread

¹¹⁰ Wellington, v, p. 200.

¹¹¹ Galpin, *Grain Supply*, p. 15.

Company Bill also underwent considerable censure in Parliament. Perceval was a strong critic, who disputed the need for the measure, defended London millers and bakers from charges of monopoly, and contended that the bill gave the new company a monopoly.¹¹² While Liverpool's experience seemingly altered his opinion, Perceval, responding in 1812 to calls to replicate the regulation of bread, restated his view that it had failed:

The impression upon my mind, and generally I believe throughout the kingdom, was, that more mischief than good resulted from the interference of the legislature on that occasion. Discussions in parliament, such as are now brought under our notice, attempting to lower the price of human food, defeat their own object.¹¹³

Significantly both men framed their support for non-intervention in terms of experience – lessons learnt – rather than ideology. The language of non-intervention could be forcefully stated. Bathurst wrote to Richard Ryder about the proposal of an obscure merchant, a G. Braine, who had asked the government to assist with American flour imports:

Experience has shewn us that the public will be ill-served, when the Government undertakes to serve them with Provisions. Even Encouragements, in the shape of Bounties & Premiums, are with very few exceptions prejudicial. If therefore there were a greater prospect than by the late accounts there appear to be, of a very deficient Harvest, Mr Braine's proposition would not even [in] that case be advisable.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *The Senator; or, Parliamentary Chronicle* (London, 1799-1800), pp. 1620, 1624, 1745-51, 1762.

¹¹³ *PD*, 1812, xxii, 276.

¹¹⁴ TNA H.O. 42/101, fo. 143: Bathurst to Richard Ryder, 8 July 1810.

These comments illuminate why laissez-faire policies were being pursued. Their proponents believed them justified by experience, namely the perceived failure of interventionist policies. However, these statements lack the dogmatic adherence to political economy found in Grenville's speeches.¹¹⁵ Nor can we discern the evangelical-inspired mechanistic, pessimistic world-view posited by Boyd Hilton for the post-war era – one which we might especially expect to find in the thinking of an 'evangelical' Perceval. Previous legislation was normally only enacted when a consensus existed; without a broad consensus, the policy was not repeated. Pittites did use a vogueish non-interventionist language, but this did not reflect a principled commitment to political economy.

Arguments founded on 'experience' could also justify repeating previously successful interventions. This applied to erstwhile policies now resurrected to tackle the scarcities, or feared shortages, of 1808, 1810 and 1812. Chief among these was prohibition. This contradicted Edmund Burke's non-interventionist strictures in his *Thoughts on the Present Scarcity*, which was cited by a critical pamphleteer.¹¹⁶ Similarly resurrected was paying bounties for landing fish in London. Bounties in 1808 targeted larger ships, and supported the Newfoundland fisheries. In 1811 a British Fisheries Bill was pressed by George Rose, albeit

¹¹⁵ PD, 1811, xix, 794.

¹¹⁶ E. Burke, *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*, originally presented to the Right Hon. William Pitt, in the month of November, 1795 (London, 1800), pp. 40-3; W. Dixon, *An Inquiry into the Impolicy of the Continuance of the Prohibition of Distillation from Grain in Great-Britain; in which its Injurious Effects on Agriculture, and its tendency to Produce a Deficiency of National Subsistence, are Particularly Considered* (Liverpool, 1810), pp. 21-2.

without success.¹¹⁷ The government did explore importing rice from India,¹¹⁸ and authorised licensed imports of corn and other foodstuffs from France in 1808-10, while Sir John Sinclair in 1808 proposed securing supplies from the Mediterranean region.¹¹⁹ Overall, the response of government built on the perceived lessons of previous scarcities, an experienced-based approach which did not preclude appropriate legislative action.

The second major theme concerns interests. This was not an overtly partisan issue.

Opposition critics of government policy differed greatly in their reasons. Ponsonby in 1808 denied that prohibition was needed, because the alleged scarcities did not exist.¹²⁰ Grenville in 1811 took a strongly Smithian, non-interventionist stance.¹²¹ Agricultural Whigs such as Charles Western championed the interests of farmers, opposing imports, thereby foreshadowing his approbation of the 1815 Corn Laws. Both in Parliament and the press the Foxites portrayed the measure as hostile to farmers and landowners.¹²²

Contemporaries perceived the debate as a clash of ‘corn versus sugar’. Michael McCahill has argued that a successful agriculturist lobby operated in the House of Lords in 1811 which defeated the government’s plan to let corn and sugar compete as equals in distilleries. This lobbying combined the Earl of Hardwicke with barley-growing interests in

¹¹⁷ A. Gambles, ‘Free Trade and State Formation: The Political Economy of Fisheries Policy in Britain and the United Kingdom circa 1780-1850’, *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), p. 302; *Report from Select Committee on Newfoundland Trade: with Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee; and an Appendix* 1817 (436), pp. 7, 36; *PD*, 1811, xix, 680-2. The prospectus for the Company for the Encouragement and Extension of the British Fisheries can be found in ‘Encouragement of the British Fisheries’, *The Tradesman*, 6 (1811), pp. 316-22.

¹¹⁸ NLS, MS 1041, fo. 115-8: cabinet discussion paper on Indian rice imports, 7 June 1810.

¹¹⁹ TNA, HO 42/94, fo. 12a-16: Sinclair to Charles Jenkinson, 10 Oct. 1808.

¹²⁰ *PD*, 1808, xi, 521.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 1811, xix, 794.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1808, xi, 521, 823; *The Morning Chronicle* (3 Mar. 1808), pp. 2-3; *ibid.*, (14 Apr. 1808), p. 2.

East Anglia and Scottish hostility from Lords Lauderdale and Aberdeen.¹²³ Alarmism among the agricultural interest was nothing new, but nor did it dissipate during the Napoleonic War. Lords Redesdale and Chichester, both government supporters, lamented the burden the income tax imposed on the landed classes.¹²⁴ Complaints that government gave agriculture insufficient encouragement, voiced in the 1780s by Arthur Young and Sir John Sinclair,¹²⁵ was now reiterated by periodicals, notably the *Farmer's Magazine*,¹²⁶ and occasionally by the pro-government newspaper the *Courier*.¹²⁷ An amusing version of these complaints came from a *Morning Chronicle* correspondent: Perceval was mocked as 'a Cockney Chancellor of the Exchequer, who derives his ideas of sporting from the Poulterers' shops of the Metropolis, and his knowledge of farming from the gardens of Hampstead'.¹²⁸

There were also apocalyptic prognostications, which claimed that relying on French imports and prohibition would cause widespread de-cultivation. Poor-quality barley would not provide extra food, being only fit for distilleries. The agricultural interest contended that Britain and Ireland could be self-sufficient in food. This debate overlapped with the contemporaneous intellectual debate over whether commerce had any value. In 1811 James Cruickshank followed William Spence's panegyrising of agriculture by asserting that 'the produce of the soil of every country is the fund which must supply it both with the

¹²³ M. McCahill, *The House of Lords in the Age of George III (1760-1811)* (Chichester, 2007), pp. 360-1.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 359; *Colchester*, ii, p. 160.

¹²⁵ A. Young, *Travels during the years 1787, 1788, and 1789* (London, 1792), p. 88; D. Fisher, 'Sinclair, Sir John, 1st Bt.', *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820 Online*, accessed 1 Jan. 2017 at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/sinclair-sir-john-1754-1835>.

¹²⁶ *Farmer's Magazine*, 10 (1809), p. 547.

¹²⁷ Galpin, *Grain Supply*, p. 62.

¹²⁸ *The Morning Chronicle* (14 Apr. 1808), p. 2. This derived from Perceval's proposed reforms to the game laws on 4 April 1808. Although omitted from *Parliamentary Debates*, they were described in: ibid., (5 Apr. 1808), p. 2 and (26 May 1808), p. 2; also *The Bury and Norwich Post* (13 Apr. 1808), p. 4.

necessaries and conveniences of life ... whatsoever a tax in the first instance may be laid, that tax must at least find its way to the produce of soil, – to the agriculturist, and be paid by him’.¹²⁹ Concerns about imports also heightened calls for protectionism. Hence Vansittart wrote to Sidmouth:

One point seems clear to me that a considerable protecting duty ought to be laid on foreign grain. If the wheat of France, after paying 12s/ per quarter to Bonaparte can still be afforded at cheaper than ours can be grown, it is clear that the competition must be serious to our farmers, & that we positively make a present to the French treasury to the amount of that duty. If subject to this protecting duty we allow in all cases a complete liberty of export & import, without bounty, I think we shall approach to the best practical system for the permanent supply of this country; & at the same time give an encouragement to the agriculture of Ireland, equivalent to the amount of the protecting duty on foreign grain. The trade with Ireland to be perfectly free, & clear of all duties; & the warehousing system to be allowed to foreign corn.¹³⁰

Vansittart’s ideas foreshadow the 1815 Corn Law in removing subsidies, encouraging Irish agriculture, and UK-wide free trade, and in warehousing foreign corn. It shows how our understanding of post-war food policy requires a consideration of war-time experiences, something under-emphasised in Hilton’s *Corn, Cash, Commerce*.¹³¹

¹²⁹ J. Cruickshank, *A Letter to the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval, Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the subject of the Distillery-Bill now pending before Parliament* (London, 1811), p. 15.

¹³⁰ DRO, 152M/C1810/OZ: Vansittart to Sidmouth, 4 Apr. 1810.

¹³¹ Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, pp. 1-9.

The supporters of prohibition argued that self-sufficiency was achievable despite the restrictions. A far-sighted exception was William Lushington, agent for Grenada, who argued that thirty years of improvement had not lessened the deficit between demand and domestic supply. He gingerly downplayed the landed interest's significance, stating that 'The landed interest, therefore, forms only a part, and that not the most considerable of the present imperial system of Great Britain'. Their political power rested on their former pre-eminence, not present significance.¹³² But Lushington aside, confidence in achieving self-sufficiency was unshaken even by the 1811 census, which showed a marked increase in population, except for Rose urging support for increased fisheries.¹³³

No administration slavishly acquiesced in every demand of the landed interest. Hence the government passed distillery acts, which is understandable given the unpredictable nature of the harvest. But the Board of Agriculture's budget rose from £3,000 to £4,800.¹³⁴ Parliament enacted a record 977 enclosure acts from 1805 to 1814,¹³⁵ which Perceval cited in 1811 to deny that prohibiting corn had discouraged agricultural improvement.¹³⁶ Therefore it is tempting to dismiss agriculturist complaints as special pleading. But these complaints highlight their continuing sense of insecurity, and explains their staunch protectionism in the post-war era. We can also better appreciate that the Pittites' approach towards the Corn Law post-1815 continued the balanced treatment adopted towards the landed interest during the war, impelled by the same impulse of securing food supply through a mixture of intervention and non-intervention.

¹³² W. Lushington, *The Interests of Agriculture and Commerce, Inseparable* (London, 1808), pp. 34-5, 59-62.

¹³³ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 179.

¹³⁴ J. Sinclair, *The Correspondence of Sir John Sinclair* (2 vols., London, 1831), i, p. 114; R. Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture (1793-1822)', *EHR*, 74 (1959), p. 60.

¹³⁵ M. Turner, 'Corn Crisis in Britain in the Age of Malthus', in idem (ed.), *Malthus and his Time* (London, 1986), p. 120.

¹³⁶ *PD*, 1811, xix, 690.

Joseph Barham MP believed that ‘From its original connexion with colonial subjects, I trace all the opposition to the distillery bill’.¹³⁷ Because the government proposed and Parliament agreed to shift the monopoly in distillation from barley to sugar, the debate had an additional venom. Allegations of favouring the unpopular West Indian interest were invoked to condemn measures traditionally adopted to ameliorate the possible food scarcity. Edward Wakefield warned that once the ‘Colonial Interest’ had ‘possession of the market. It will be long before they give it up’.¹³⁸ The interest’s erstwhile championing of the slave trade diminished its respectability.¹³⁹ Undoubtedly champions of prohibition, such as Lushington, Barham, or Canning’s friend Charles Ellis writing in *The Quarterly Review*, had Caribbean connections, either as agents or owning estates. Lushington and Barham, along with parliamentary supporters of prohibition such as George Hibbert, were part of the London West Indian interest detailed by David Ryden’s 2012 article on their lobbying.¹⁴⁰ However, Barham had converted to abolitionism in 1804.¹⁴¹ The abolitionist James Stephen, who considered planters ‘adventurers’, nonetheless acknowledged that there was a problem.¹⁴² Similarly, in October 1810 Lord Advocate Archibald Colquhoun noted that coffee surpluses in Britain would last for six or seven years and that sugar from conquered islands would find no market were distilleries open to grain.¹⁴³

Therefore we may ask, was preventing scarcity really the motive for government action? Probably yes. We know that Perceval did not think a glut of sugar existed. In

¹³⁷ J. Barham, *Considerations on the Late Act for Continuing the Prohibition of Corn in the Distillery, Addressed in a Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Holland* (London, 1810), p. 3.

¹³⁸ PRONI, D207/45/17: Wakefield to Foster, 22 Apr. 1809.

¹³⁹ *HMC Fortescue*, viii, p. 163; Cruickshank, *Letter to the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ D. Ryden, ‘Sugar, Spirits, and Fodder: The London West India Interest and the Glut of 1807-15’, *Atlantic Studies*, 9 (2012), pp. 41-64.

¹⁴¹ *PD*, 1805, ii, 461-3.

¹⁴² BL, Add MS 49184, fo. 65: Stephen to Perceval, 13 July 1808; Add MS 58998, fo. 153: Stephen’s paper ‘Brazil’, sent 7 Jan. 1808.

¹⁴³ Holland (Perceval) Papers, E.45: Colquhoun to Perceval, 21 Oct. 1810.

November 1807 Perceval, responding to Canning's assertion to the contrary, commented that sugar prices in Amsterdam and Hamburg were 90s per cwt, compared to 30s in London. He blamed Napoleon's Continental System for creating an excess of sugar in Britain.¹⁴⁴ He reiterated this view in 1812 when discussing the Leeward Islands' distress.¹⁴⁵ In 1808 he denied that the committee investigating the subject was formed 'with a view to consult the interests of the colonies, at the expence [sic] of those of the mother country', whilst expressing his happiness if the price of food fell through barley being added to the market.¹⁴⁶ The government did help the 'colonial interest'. Aside from prohibition, coffee duties were lowered, brandy duties increased, and rum preferred over Spanish brandy in naval purchases.¹⁴⁷ These accorded with the myriad proposals for relief advocated in pamphlets and reviews.¹⁴⁸ But ministers feared appearing too favourable. Bathurst wrote to Perceval in October 1810: 'We must not act as if we prefer'd the Colonial, to the landed Interest of the Country'.¹⁴⁹ Bathurst's view, which ultimately prevailed, was that prohibitions should only apply in time of genuine scarcity. Politically this was realistic – Parliament would only pass distillery bills when they feared scarcity, not simply to help West Indian interests.

¹⁴⁴ BL, Add MS 89143/1/12/1: Canning to Perceval, 9 Nov. 1807 (with Perceval's MS annotations).

¹⁴⁵ PD, 1812, xxi, 748.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1808, xi, 58-9.

¹⁴⁷ Dixon, *Inquiry into the Impolicy*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁴⁸ *Report from the Committee on the Commercial State of the West India Colonies*, 1807 (65), p. 5; PD, 1807, ix, 99-100; 1811, xix, 708-11. Barham, *Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Holland*, pp. 56-7, 60-1; W. Layman, *Outline of a Plan for the Better Cultivation, Security, & Defence of the British West Indies: Being the Original Suggestion for Providing an Effectual Substitute for the African Slave Trade, and Preventing the Dependence of those Colonies on America for Supplies* (London, 1807); J. Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 210-18.

¹⁴⁹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, E.43: Bathurst to Perceval, 14 Oct. 1810.

The third major theme of these debates is the difference across the United Kingdom. One manifestation was the contrasting harvest conditions, which permitted debate about whether scarcity existed. For example, in 1807 in England prices consistently fell, whereas in Scotland frost and rain caused an atrocious harvest and price rises. Conversely in 1808-9 the English harvest was worse than in Scotland. Ireland was especially contentious. In 1808 there was a fierce debate over the state of the Irish harvest.¹⁵⁰ In November 1811 Richmond wrote to Bathurst that he could make no return because ‘we have no means of knowing accurately or nearly so’ the state of the Irish harvest.¹⁵¹ An inevitable second manifestation of differences was over the appropriate response. In 1808 the government introduced UK-wide prohibition. Irish pressure meant that the government tried to have Ireland exempted in 1809, but MPs overrode them. An Irish exception was legislated for in 1810 and 1812. Contrastingly ministers consistently refused to make concessions to Scottish distillers.

Promoting Irish agriculture was thought to foster her economic development, and enjoyed widespread support. However, economic questions did occasion debate when a direct comparison could be drawn between the situation in Ireland and the rest of the UK. Particularly controversial was the idea of exempting Ireland. The UK-wide prohibition of 1808 proved unpopular and utterly unenforceable in Ireland, despite Foster’s system of fining districts where illicit distillation occurred.¹⁵² Revenue was lost whilst grain continued to be illegally distilled.¹⁵³ Consequently the 1809 Distillery Bill proposed exempting Ireland from renewed prohibition. Opposition came from two sources – those against this exemption, and those hostile to prohibition altogether. An amendment removing the exemption was carried

¹⁵⁰ *PD*, 1808, xi, 444.

¹⁵¹ *HMC Bathurst*, p. 159.

¹⁵² Holland (Perceval) Papers, D.25: Lord Abercorn to Perceval, 16 Nov. 1809; D.34: idem, 16 Dec. 1809; E.9: idem, 12 Mar. 1810; PRONI, D623/A/85/24: Abercorn to Wellesley Pole, 18 Dec. 1811; idem, D207/38/7: Wellesley Pole to Foster, 22 Feb. 1810.

¹⁵³ PRONI, D207/69/1: Foster to Perceval, 9 Feb. 1811.

by 90 votes to 61. To treat Ireland differently incurred the complaint of unfair favouritism.¹⁵⁴

It created the problem of preventing corn exports to Ireland, which would then be distilled.

Nevertheless in 1810 the government did pass an exemption. In 1812 Perceval contended that permitting separate arrangements necessitated restricting the Anglo-Irish spirits trade, articulating a nuanced understanding of the principles of Union:

Reciprocity was the foundation of the Union between the two countries; and if the distillation from grain were permitted in Ireland and prohibited in Great Britain, and the intercourse between the two were continued, where would be the reciprocity of interest? Irish distillers, indeed, might, as was no doubt anxiously wished, be prosperous, but the English would be ruined.¹⁵⁵

Yet these comments also reveal the political reality of the Union. As Perceval starkly told Foster in April 1808, ‘you perhaps have a better estimate of the Irish feeling, but it is by the English one that our Conduct will be judged’.¹⁵⁶ However, the continuing Irish executive in Dublin did eventually persuade ministers in Whitehall to treat Ireland differently. This contrasts with the lack of success by Scottish lobbyists. Distilling was as important in parts of Scotland as in Ireland. Perceval acknowledged, when discussing the duties on spirits imposed in 1808, that ‘Scotland I always considered as standing distinct’.¹⁵⁷ Yet in 1810 Scottish opinion was ignored. In April 1810 a petition was received from Kincardine landowners, stating their

¹⁵⁴ *The Farmer’s Magazine*, 11 (1810), p. 102.

¹⁵⁵ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 324.

¹⁵⁶ PRONI, D562/2147: Perceval to Foster, 9 Apr. 1808.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, D562/2112: Perceval to Foster, 16 June 1808.

concern, that an Act to prohibit the Distillation of Spirits from Corn or Grain in *Great Britain* ... [and] an Act ... to suspend the importation of *British* or *Irish* made spirits into *Great Britain* or *Ireland*, respectively, has been passed into a Law during the present Session: And praying for a repeal of the said Act.

Similarly worded petitions from across Scotland followed between April and June 1810.¹⁵⁸ These complaints were ignored. The following year another complication arose over setting countervailing duties on spirits between Scotland and Ireland, the consequence of multiple tax régimes, which differed between England and Scotland and between Highlands and Lowlands. Perceval declared that:

he did not know well how to meet the difficulty respecting Scotland, which had now so decided an advantage over Ireland, but so far from having any thing like the indisposition to attend to the concerns of the latter country, with which he had been charged, he was willing to attend to every suggestion from both sides of the House, and to adopt whatever should be most agreeable to their wishes.¹⁵⁹

Significantly, in 1812 Perceval asked Sir John Sinclair, Scottish MP, landowner, and noted agricultural writer, to speak before him during the Distillery Bill debate. But Sinclair's objections were overruled. Interestingly Perceval argued that the bill primarily sought 'to remedy an inconvenience which pressed too severely on Ireland'.¹⁶⁰ The diverse nature of the United Kingdom enabled the government to cite poor harvests in one part to justify their

¹⁵⁸ *JC*, 65 (1810), pp. 258, 272, 276, 287, 298, 307, 322, 329, 341, 345, 348, 357, 373, 381, 396, 412, 457, 489, 495, 504.

¹⁵⁹ *PD*, 1811, xix, 1177-8.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1812, xxi, 288, 291-2.

overall policy. Unlike those MPs who desired a rigid uniformity of approach, ministers ultimately recognised the ineffectiveness of Irish prohibition. The post-Union perpetuation of an Irish executive partially explains this change, in contrast to Scotland. Yet bolstering Irish agriculture sat within a vision of a self-sufficient United Kingdom, that sought to tie together the frayed connections of the Union.

Five significant points can be drawn from this examination of food supplies during the Napoleonic Wars. First, there were important debates about food supplies prior to 1815. The works of Fetter, Hilton, and Gambles have begun too abruptly in 1814-15.¹⁶¹ But to understand the Corn Laws of 1815 we need to appreciate the war-time experience of those who framed them, particularly their wish to avoid relying on foreign supplies and the idea of Ireland as a granary for the United Kingdom. Equally the legacy of comparative free trade in this era was subsequently cited by free traders.¹⁶² Secondly, there was less sympathy for government intervention in the internal corn trade than in 1795 and 1800-1. But this derived from the perceived failure of earlier experiments, not ideological attachment to laissez-faire ideas. Thirdly, the debates were framed around a clash of interests between representatives of the agricultural and West Indian lobbies, because they focused on legislation that replaced the corn monopoly in distilleries with a sugar monopoly. Yet successive governments sought to avoid excessive favouritism to the West Indian lobby and tried to couch the debate in terms of scarcity. When they did so they were broadly successful. Fourthly, the agricultural price crash in 1814 merely exacerbated agriculturalists' earlier fears of imports and de-cultivation. Fifthly, despite complaints of ignorance or neglect of Ireland by some Irish MPs, on this topic

¹⁶¹ Fetter, *Economist in Parliament*; Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*, p. 4; Gambles, *Protection and Politics*, p. 27.

¹⁶² R. Huch, *The Radical Lord Radnor: The Public Life of Viscount Folkestone, Third Earl of Radnor, 1779-1869* (Minneapolis, 1977), p. 152.

there was greater sensitivity among ministers to Ireland's circumstances than to Scotland's. However, the lack of consensus reflected the differing ways in which politicians interpreted the letter and spirit of the Anglo-Irish Act of Union. Ensuring food supplies guaranteed the domestic stability necessary for undergirding the war-effort, and enabled exports to supply Wellington's army, thereby laying the foundations for eventually victory.

Bullion

The 1801-11 debates over the Bullion Committee's report, and the subsequent *de facto* legalisation of paper-money, marked the apogee of economic discussions during the Napoleonic Wars. Publicly or privately most major politicians and economic thinkers contributed, including David Ricardo, Robert Malthus, Dugald Stewart, Sir John Sinclair, and Arthur Young.¹⁶³ Beeke again advised John Herries, who (probably with Perceval's input) produced an anti-bullionist pamphlet. Huskisson defended the Report he had co-authored. His collaborators, Francis Horner and Henry Thornton, had both previously published on political economy, and now supported their report in parliament. The subject sparked copious political debate. Bishop Moss wrote to Grenville: '[Lord] King is this moment arrived from London & says nothing is talked of there but Bank Paper & specie, not as matters of Politics, but of

¹⁶³ *Works of Malthus*, vii, pp. 57-83; Stewart, *Political Economy*, i, pp. 431-52; J. Sinclair, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Intituled, 'The Question concerning the Depreciation of the Currency Stated and Examined' by William Huskisson, Esq MP. Together with Several Political Maxims regarding Coin and Paper Currency intended to explain the Real Nature and Advantages, of the Present System* (London, 1810); A. Young, *An Enquiry into the Progressive Value of Money in England, As Marked by the Price of Agricultural Products* (London, 1812).

individual feeling & concern'.¹⁶⁴ Consequently an estimated 194 pamphlets were published on the question in 1810-11.¹⁶⁵

The debates originated in Pitt's decision in 1797, amid a panic over French invasion, to suspend the convertibility of Bank of England notes into gold. Worries that bank-notes would become a British *assignat* initially proved unfounded. High provision prices and a temporary derangement in the exchange between British and Irish pounds occasioned some debate in 1800-1 and 1804. In early 1809 the issue reignited as gold prices rose and the British pound note depreciated in Hamburg, Europe's foremost foreign exchange.¹⁶⁶ The strongest 'bullionist' advocates, notably Ricardo, attributed this phenomenon entirely to the malign expansion of bank-notes, particularly those issued by the Bank of England. Francis Horner secured a committee into rising gold prices, appointed in February 1810. Unlike Liverpool's adept handling of post-war committees,¹⁶⁷ Perceval blundered over the bullion committee. He had previously claimed that 'he could not understand, how the reduction of the bank of England paper could affect the price of bullion'.¹⁶⁸ But he permitted the report to be written by the pro-convertibility triad of Horner, Huskisson, and Thornton. The evidence of bank directors denying a link between Bank of England notes and depreciation was ignored, and Whitbread taunted Perceval about his defeats in the committee.¹⁶⁹ The Report was introduced on 8 June 1810, published the following month, and triggered fevered public discussion until Horner's resolutions were debated and defeated in May 1811.

¹⁶⁴ BL, Add MS 59002, fo. 210: Moss to Grenville, 12 July 1811.

¹⁶⁵ A. Harvey, *Collision of Empire: Britain in Three World Wars, 1793-1945* (London, 1992), p. 74.

¹⁶⁶ F. Fetter, *Development of British Monetary Orthodoxy 1797-1875* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 29-39.

¹⁶⁷ B. Hilton, 'The Political Arts of Lord Liverpool', *TRHS*, 38 (1988), pp. 157-8.

¹⁶⁸ *PD*, 1810, xv, 274.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, xvii, 697. Fetter discusses the different records of voting in the bullion committee: F. Fetter, 'The Politics of the Bullion Report', *Economica*, 26 (1959), p. 107.

These debates were both technical and political. We shall first consider the technical focus on the specialist subject of political economy; before describing their political dimension of dividing the Pittites. This section duly argues that the bullion debate was partly a battle over differing ideas of political economy, and partly about the applicability of theoretical notions of political economy to practical policies. Ideas of political economy remained fluid; and politicians as often appealed to history as to theory. An appreciation of this fluidity is lacking from articles which have focused on the bullionist side of the debate, for example comparing Huskisson's theories with Thornton's.¹⁷⁰ The debates were also political, splintering Canning and Huskisson, who supported convertibility, from the adamantly hostile Perceval. After considering the possible theoretical differences between them, this section emphasises instead how Perceval's view was swayed by his own experience, the anti-convertibility opinions of his sources of information, and the importance attached to continuing the war. Perceval was also more comfortable with paper currencies and ultimately rejected monetary theory when seemingly contradicted by factual evidence that supported the status quo. Historiographically, by focusing primarily on the leading Pittites this section explains the anti-bullionist position taken by Perceval and the government. They received limited attention in Frank Fetter's significant article of 1959, which provided a general overview of the politics of the bullion report.¹⁷¹ Gambles interpreted Huskisson and Canning as being fundamentally Smithian in their pro-bullionist position in 1810-11, but focused chiefly on Sir John Sinclair and William Greenfield when

¹⁷⁰ N. Sussman, 'William Huskisson and the Bullion Controversy, 1810', *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 4 (1997), pp. 237-57; D. Besomi, 'Paper Money and National Distress: William Huskisson and the Early Theories of Credit, Speculation and Crises', *idem*, 17 (2010), pp. 49-85.

¹⁷¹ Fetter, 'Politics of Bullion Report', pp. 99-120.

discussing the anti-bullionists.¹⁷² This section instead concentrates on the leading Pittite opponents of convertibility, alongside the leading Pittite supporters.

The eventual triumph of pro-convertibility Ricardian theories, and the Victorians' allegiance to the gold standard, has obscured the lack of intellectual consensus in 1810-11. The mantle of political economy was claimed through assertion and appeal to authorities. Pro-bullionists declared their ideas to be 'sound and orthodox doctrines',¹⁷³ grounded on the principles of Smith and Locke. Huskisson wrote that it was through establishing sound principles 'upon points of general interest and leading importance in political economy, that the greatest benefits are secured to nations'.¹⁷⁴ In Parliament he referenced Lord Burleigh, Bacon, and Newton, whilst comparing the Bank of England's principles to the infamous John Law, architect of the Mississippi scheme. Rose challenged both the comparisons and the authorities which Huskisson cited.¹⁷⁵ Sir John Sinclair contrastingly declared that Huskisson relied on 'authors whose *supreme* authority, in questions of political economy, can be no longer recognized'. He alleged that Huskisson's principles were 'inconsistent with those which are sanctioned by the improvements progressively made in the science of political economy'.¹⁷⁶ Sinclair's professed antecedent was the mid-eighteenth century Jacobite political economist Sir James Steuart,¹⁷⁷ whose credentials were also championed by Board of Trade official George Chalmers.¹⁷⁸ Other anti-bullionists cited Adam Smith and David

¹⁷² Gambles, *Protection and Politics*, pp. 93-7.

¹⁷³ [R. Grant], 'Sir P. Francis and Ricardo on Bullion', *QR*, 3 (1810), p. 156.

¹⁷⁴ W. Huskisson, *The Question concerning the Depreciation of our Currency Stated and Examined* (London, 1810), p. x.

¹⁷⁵ *PD*, 1811, xix, 981, 984-6.

¹⁷⁶ Sinclair, *Remarks on a Pamphlet*, pp. 36, 54.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 67.

¹⁷⁸ G. Chalmers, *Consideration on Commerce, Bullion and Coin, Circulation and Exchanges; with a View to Our Present Circumstances* 2nd edn (London, 1811), pp. 33, 79, 83, 102, 104-5, 107, 110, 135, 213.

Hume as supporting authorities.¹⁷⁹ John Herries, Perceval's private secretary and commissary-in-chief to the army, acting effectively as an official government pamphleteer, declared that the 'Practical Men' opposing the Report were 'prepared to shew, that, upon the genuine principles of political economy, and the soundest maxims of general policy, the modification of our currency ... has been highly advantageous to our interests at home and abroad'. His repeated appeal that the nostrums of political economy favoured the anti-bullionists' cause hardly constituted rejection of its value.¹⁸⁰ These disagreements demonstrate the lack of theoretical consensus.

Despite appeals to its 'principles', political economy remained fluid. Sometimes there was a confident belief that political economy was better understood than ever before. In 1810 the select committee on marine insurance declared that 'political economy was imperfectly understood' in 1720 when the foremost act on the subject was passed (though broadly approving of it).¹⁸¹ Superiority was asserted in 1814 over an even more majestic age: 'The reign of queen Elizabeth, though glorious, was not one in which sound principles of commerce were known', argued Arthur Onslow MP when advocating the repeal of compulsory seven-year apprenticeships enacted in 1564.¹⁸² But political economy was not yet a solidified set of ideas. Joseph Marryat flayed the marine insurance committee for their impertinence, including their citing of Adam Smith to defend their dogmatism.¹⁸³ Phrases such as 'free trade' could be invoked to mean unrestricted involvement in commerce, rather than tariff-free commerce, as when Hallamshire cutlers in April 1812 claimed 'that a free

¹⁷⁹ C. Bosanquet, *Practical Observation on the Report of the Bullion-Committee* 2nd edn (London, 1810), pp. 63, 66, 86-7; Herries, *Review of the Controversy*, pp. 92, 98, 103, 114.

¹⁸⁰ Herries, *Review of the Controversy*, pp. 84, 88, 103, 118.

¹⁸¹ *Report; with Minutes of Evidence, and Accounts, from the Select Committee on Marine Insurance*, 1810 (226), p. 2.

¹⁸² *PD*, 1814, xxvii, 564.

¹⁸³ J. Marryat, *Observations upon the Report of the Committee on Marine Insurance* (London, 1810), pp. 5, 42-3.

trade to every part of His Majesty's dominions is the natural right of all his subjects'.¹⁸⁴ Most striking was that William Playfair edited and commented on Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, interleaving his own diametrically opposite views on the corn trade or apprenticeships amid Smith's chapters.¹⁸⁵ Contemporaries found this peculiar, even objectionable.¹⁸⁶ But that it happened reminds us of the fluid understanding of political economy in the 1800s.

Yet alongside this dispute was a question of the applicability of theoretical economic ideas to practical problems. Herries constantly positioned himself alongside the 'Practical Men', ranged against the 'metaphysicians'. Rose argued that 'Almost all writers on the intricate subject of the theory of money and exchange have differed widely from each other, and some of them from themselves'.¹⁸⁷ Vansittart, despite lauding Parliament, nonetheless declared that 'I by no means think that it is in any large assembly, even so composed, that abstract principles are best discussed and decided'.¹⁸⁸ Both Huskisson and Canning threw back the charge of abstraction. They argued that anti-bullionists wanted to establish an abstract standard for the currency. Huskisson wondered 'how they would be satisfied with an abstract payment of their salaries'.¹⁸⁹ Henry Parnell supported resumption by arguing that the evidence to the committee from 'men in business' 'ought to be received with caution ... men in business are commonly most ignorant of the science of the particular business which constitutes their profession'.¹⁹⁰ Their evidence did not 'lean to the conclusions that the principles of political economy offered', thereby implying that these principles did offer a

¹⁸⁴ *PD*, 1812, xxii, 422-3.

¹⁸⁵ K. Tribe, 'Adam Smith in English: From Playfair to Cannan', in idem (ed.), *A Critical Bibliography of Adam Smith* (London, 2002), pp. 32-5.

¹⁸⁶ 'Playfair's *Edition of Wealth of Nations*', *ER*, 7 (1806), pp. 470-1.

¹⁸⁷ *PD*, 1811, xix, 837.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 923-4.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 978.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1021-2.

clear answer. Debating the issue was complicated because neither side agreed on definitions of ‘depreciation’ or ‘excess’.¹⁹¹ Therefore to make sense of the subject, both sides resorted to historical precedents – especially the re-coinage of William III’s reign. This appeared historically analogous, being concurrent with a French war, struggling trade, and rising prices (including of bullion). The *Bullion Report* and Huskisson cited the Bank of England’s excessive issuing of paper-notes in William’s reign to demonstrate that this caused high gold prices.¹⁹² Herries emphasised that Huskisson and the *Report* had used the 1690s precedent differently, and that neither had mentioned the war in the 1690s, which was alongside ‘large foreign expenditure and an unfavourable trade, then producing effects similar to those which we now witness’. Hence William’s reign was a stronger precedent for opposing resumption.¹⁹³ This difference between theory and practice loomed large in the disagreements amongst the Pittites on the bullion question.

The Pittite division over bullion

The bullion debates were self-evidently political, being decided by MPs preferring to continue the war than adopt convertibility. Despite efforts to avoid an overly partisan discussion,¹⁹⁴ a demonstrable cleavage existed between ministerial Pittites, or those sympathetic to them (Sidmouth’s faction and Lord Castlereagh), and those outside of Perceval’s ministry, whether Canning’s faction of liberal Pittites or the ‘Whigs’. The last group broadly supported the bullion report. Horner spearheaded the campaign, getting the

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 1065-6; Herries, *A Review of the Controversy*, pp. 6-10.

¹⁹² *Report, together with Minutes of Evidence, and Accounts, from the Select Committee on the High Price of Gold Bullion 1810* (349), p. 4; Huskisson, *Depreciation of our Currency*, pp. 75, 103-6, 119.

¹⁹³ Herries, *Review of the Controversy*, pp. 53-78.

¹⁹⁴ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XIV.15: Huskisson to Perceval, 28 Oct. 1810.

committee established, being one of the three authors of the report, and moving the resulting resolutions. Brougham, although inactive in the debates, had originally been on the committee, but was removed.¹⁹⁵ Grenville sympathised with resuming cash payments, blaming inconvertibility for the high price of bullion, and arguing that restrictions, while necessary in 1797, were ‘very ill calculated for any long continuance’.¹⁹⁶ Resumption was listed as one of the measures he hoped a Wellesley-Canning coalition would adopt in 1812.¹⁹⁷ Horner’s role ensured that the debates were perceived through a partisan lens and probably contributed to its defeat.

The Pittites were more divided. Their leaders broadly split between the ‘high Tories’ and Canning’s faction. The former opposed the report and resuming cash payments, uniting Perceval in government with Castlereagh and Vansittart outside. The latter, chiefly Canning and Huskisson, supported convertibility. Huskisson co-authored and subsequently advocated the Report and its recommendations. His pamphlet posited the idea that ‘*Paper currency* is no part of the capital of a country – it is so much *circulating credit*’. This rested on confidence, unlike ‘*paper money*’ in Austria and Russia that depended on authority. Inevitably notes would be legalised into money, a process which always undermined property. He was alarmed at how the ‘temporary expedient’ of 1797 had become a system of ‘an indefinite number of years’. Consequently, he supported convertibility. Huskisson bluntly declared that Britain and ‘all civilized countries, and in all ages of the world’ agreed there needed to be a standard. By arguing that gold was a fixed measure he denied that it was impacted by supply and demand in the manner of other commodities, claiming that ‘any considerable or durable increase of price in the precious metal which form the standard of that currency cannot be ascribed to any thing but the depreciation of such currency’. Huskisson downplayed the

¹⁹⁵ Fontana, *Politics of Commercial Society*, p. 127.

¹⁹⁶ *Horner Papers*, p. 632.

¹⁹⁷ BL, Add MS 41853, fo. 245: Lord Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 12 May 1812.

consequences of convertibility for the landed and commercial interests, and for taxation. His pamphlet also reflected worries about speculating adventurers, notably in South America, with their '*mercantile delusion*'.¹⁹⁸ Those 'who still shut their eyes to the melancholy but instructive lessons' of the crash of 1810 'would remain unconvinced, even if all the follies of the South Sea adventure, or of the Mississippi scheme were acted over again'.¹⁹⁹ This did not distinguish Huskisson from his opponents. Redesdale, whilst rubbishing the Bullion Report, observed that:

The adventurers to the Brazils, Buenos Ayres, S^t Domingo, &c &c are instances of such rash speculations, producing considerable mischief by an over issue of paper. Here then is the evil which we ought to seek to remedy if capable of a remedy. I fear it is not, tho I once thought it was. I fear it is one of those evils which must be left to work its own cure.²⁰⁰

We find similar distinctions between legitimate and speculative merchants voiced in Ireland in 1810 by a Dublin Castle-instigated committee into the distress of the woollen trade. In the Irish case money was advanced by the Bank of Ireland to struggling merchants.²⁰¹ However, in 1811, although Huskisson expressed disapproval of speculation, nobody actually opposed the issuing of exchequer bills by Parliament to relieve the mercantile distress partly caused by South American losses.²⁰² The government directly cited the precedent of 1793, even recruiting former commissioners to reprise their roles.²⁰³ Perceval had allegedly also

¹⁹⁸ Huskisson, *Depreciation of our Currency*, pp. 2-3, 11, 23-5, 77, 129-49.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5.

²⁰⁰ Harrowby MSS, Vol XVI, fo. 78: Redesdale to Harrowby, 14 Oct. 1810.

²⁰¹ TNA, H.O. 100/157, fo. 239-40: Report of the Committee, 9 July 1810.

²⁰² *PD*, 1811, xix, 340.

²⁰³ NRS, GD113/462/173: Perceval to Gilbert Innes, 9 Mar. 1811.

facilitated the 1797 issuing of exchequer bills to distressed West Indian planters and merchants.²⁰⁴ Nor was dissent voiced against Perceval's swift actions to restore financial calm following financier Abraham Goldsmid's suicide, despite the temporary losses this entailed for the Treasury.²⁰⁵

Canning's opposition was unsurprising given his association with Huskisson and increasing hostility to Perceval's administration by May 1811.²⁰⁶ Horner's comment that the bullion question 'must be a very unpalatable' subject for Canning implies that he lacked interest in economic questions. Nonetheless Canning's speech 'astonished every body', combining knowledge with style.²⁰⁷ He feared that Vansittart wanted to scrap the idea 'of a fixed standard of the currency of the realm', and worried about those who viewed inconvertibility 'not as an occasional law, growing out of a temporary necessity ... but a wise and provident contrivance'.²⁰⁸ Certainly opponents of convertibility tended to credit paper money with stimulating the economy. Arthur Young claimed in 1812 that the £2 million put forward for enclosures to Parliament 'under a checked or lessened currency, would be as impossible, as to effect it by the want of a magician; and yet, every shilling of the money is applied with the direct view of natural production; with positive conversion of paper into all that cultivation can produce'.²⁰⁹ Contrastingly Huskisson argued that Britain's legal and economic circumstances meant that she needed a smaller currency issue than other countries.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Sinclair, *Correspondence of Sinclair*, i, p. 114.

²⁰⁵ BL, Add MS 38245, fo. 203-6: Perceval to Executors of Abraham Goldsmid, 1 Oct. 1810, Yale, OSB MSs File 11716: Perceval to John Wilmot, Oct. 1810; Harrowby MSS Vol. V, fo. 27-33: Richard to Dudley Ryder, 29 Sep., 1 and 4 Oct. 1810; *PD*, 1812, xxii, 451.

²⁰⁶ As an example of their 'irritability' on this issue in early 1811 see *Plumer Ward*, i, p. 352.

²⁰⁷ *Horner Papers*, p. 688.

²⁰⁸ *PD*, 1811, xix, 1080.

²⁰⁹ Young, *The Progressive Value of Money in England*, p. vii.

²¹⁰ Huskisson, *Depreciation of our Currency*, p. 120.

Why and how did the government Pittites differ from Huskisson and Canning? One possibility is that they differed over the applicability of economic theory. Huskisson devoted several digressions to foiling the idea of the ‘balance of trade’, emphasising instead ‘the true principle of commerce; – *the interchange of reciprocal and equivalent benefit*’.²¹¹ Contemporaries, including Thomas Chalmers, accused the government of being wedded to mercantilist nostrums, supporting a favourable balance of trade.²¹² Ultimately Huskisson’s position caused him to support convertibility, whereas ministerial Pittites did not, implying his greater confidence in theoretical economic ideas. Yet Herries, although differing on details, nevertheless saw trade deficits as eventually self-correcting.²¹³ George Chalmers explicitly condemned the idea of the balance of trade and expressed doubts about the Corn Laws.²¹⁴ Perceval did opine in 1809 that ‘Where a large proportion of Exports are paid for in Bullion or Specie, it may be fairly considered as a favourable state of our Commerce’. But Perceval’s keenness to acquire bullion through trade was linked, not to a mercantilist-style equation of bullion with national wealth, but the need for bullion to fund overseas operations.²¹⁵ The mutual benefit of commerce he envisaged with Spain through securing British access to South America, barely differed from Huskisson’s idea of mutually increasing wealth. To Perceval ‘It is only thro’ our commerce that we can keep up our exertions, or find the means then of advancing this very money’ (Spain’s requested loan), allowing Spain to concentrate on fighting France.²¹⁶ Moreover, Huskisson supported bounties, which suggests that whilst his support for freer trade was probably more

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 69.

²¹² *The Monthly Review*, 64 (1811), pp. 11-12, 109, 442; W. Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers* (4 vols., London, 1852-4), i, p. 133.

²¹³ Herries, *Review of the Controversy*, pp. 90-1.

²¹⁴ G. Chalmers, *An Estimate of Comparative Strength of Great Britain: and of the Losses of Her Trade, from every War, since the Revolution, with an Introduction of Previous History* (London, 1810), pp. 330-1, 362-73, 388, 416.

²¹⁵ NUL, PsF 7635/5-7: Perceval’s paper on the state of the finances, Sep. 1809.

²¹⁶ Duke University, Richard Wellesley Papers: Perceval to Wellesley, 19 Apr. 1810.

theoretically grounded and advanced than Perceval's, the practical differences between them were slight.

A second potential distinction was whether convertibility would stop the war. In his pamphlet Huskisson argued that convertibility was necessary to uphold the national character abroad.²¹⁷ Canning implicitly suggested that a sound currency was needed to continue the war, although he disagreed with resuming cash payments within two years. He also complained that Perceval had, through reference to the war and the harvest, misdirected the debate away from the crucial issue of currency depreciation, 'raising a crowd of images with which it has no relation'.²¹⁸ In Parliament Huskisson did not mention the war. Perceval swooped on this omission. To Perceval the bullion question fundamentally revolved around the war. He declared:

that if they adopted the Resolutions of the hon. and learned gent opposite [Horner], such an adoption would be tantamount to a declaration that they would no longer continue those foreign exertions which they had hitherto considered as indispensable to the security of the country. He begged to be by no means understood, that he considered the question could be discussed without a distinct reference to the circumstances of the country, and he had, therefore, felt great astonishment at the manner in which an hon. friend of his (Mr. Huskisson) had divested it of all such reference.²¹⁹

This reflected Perceval's firm dissent from the Bullion Report's conclusions. Similarly, his Home Secretary Richard Ryder told Harrowby, during the financial crisis triggered by

²¹⁷ Huskisson, *Depreciation of our Currency*, pp. 148-9.

²¹⁸ *PD*, 1811, xix, 1081, 1083-4, 1112.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1064.

Abraham Goldsmid's suicide, that 'The Report of the Bullion Committee is thought by most who are conversant with the subject by all whom I have seen to be the main cause of all this commercial distress'.²²⁰

Perceval's criticisms of Huskisson were initially expressed privately. On receiving Huskisson's pamphlet, he replied that 'I remain in all ignorance, or under all the prejudice which influenced me in the Committee'. Neither the report 'nor the Circumstances which have since occurred have in any degree diminished my apprehensions of the ruinous consequences of what that report recommended'.²²¹ Having perused Huskisson's pamphlet Perceval explained his objections to Croker, arguing that Huskisson had unfairly kept

out of sight ... the circumstance of interrupted commercial intercourse with the Continent, which in my opinion is sufficient, together with the causes which he mentions, to account for almost all these symptoms and phenomena which he ascribes solely to the supposed excess in our paper circulation.

Perceval conceded that paper currency might have played a role in the 'symptoms and phenomena' Huskisson chiefly blamed on excessive currency. But recommending convertibility was 'tantamount to a Parliamentary declaration that we must submit to any terms of peace rather than continue the war, which I apprehend under his project, would be found utterly impossible'. An accompanying memorandum elaborated further. Perceval dismissed Huskisson's idea that Parliament could physically restore 'things to their natural course', given that Napoleon's Continental System blocked one major source of bullion.²²²

²²⁰ Harrowby MSS, Vol. V, fo. 29: Richard to Dudley Ryder, 29 Sep. 1810.

²²¹ Holland (Perceval) Paper Copy Letters, fo. 22: Perceval to Huskisson, 30 Oct. 1810.

²²² *The Croker Papers*, ed. L. Jennings (3 vols., London, 1884), i, pp. 34-6.

The alternative source was, as Perceval had long recognised, South America. But this commerce initially depended on credit and would take time to yield returns.²²³

Another private testimony to Perceval's anti-bullionist views was scribbled into the margin of Sir John Sinclair's pamphlet. Perceval worried that the 'emissaries [of Napoleon] might contrive to get into their possession numbers of the notes of the Bank of England,' thereby pressurising the Bank, undermining the public credit, and hence 'dry up at once the sources of commercial, agricultural, and financial prosperity, and render the burden of those expenses which are essential to our security, utterly impossible to be maintained'. The *Report* was criticised for suggesting that the Bank should reduce its advances to the government were convertibility to occur, thereby hindering government borrowing.²²⁴ The practicalities of conducting the war therefore constituted Perceval's main reason for opposition.

A third possible difference from Canning was Perceval's sources of information. One font of knowledge was Perceval's own experience. At the Treasury he had struggled with furnishing the bullion necessary to continue the war against France. This made him wary of having bullion tied up in the Bank of England, as would happen with convertibility. Perceval had good relations with the Bank of England, which doubtless made him sympathetic to its anti-convertibility views.²²⁵ Complementing these experiences were others' private opinions. In June 1810 Lord Melville sent him Thomas Reid's views. Reid, as a director of the East India Company, would have considered the Indian implications of convertibility.²²⁶ Perceval's colleagues and friends also received opinions which could have indirectly influenced Perceval. Redesdale wrote to Harrowby in September 1810 flaying the report: 'It

²²³ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 205-11: Perceval's MS memorandum and notes on the bullion question, nd.

²²⁴ Sinclair, *Memoir of Sinclair*, ii, pp. 263-4.

²²⁵ J. Collier, *The Life of Abraham Newland, Esq. late Principal Cashier at the Bank of England; with Some Account of that Great National Establishment* (London, 1808), pp. 148-51.

²²⁶ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXII.71: Melville to Perceval, 29 June 1810.

seems to me the most audacious assumption of superior judgement derived from theory in opposition to opinions founded on experience ever offered to the world; & should have a better answerer than Sir John Sinclair'. Redesdale argued that less paper money would mean less currency. He conceded that this would lower prices but make the circulating medium dearer through its scarcity. The present state of Europe made convertibility impracticable:

But if practicable, I cannot conceive what would be the advantage produced by it. Gold & silver in the state of coin, are of no value but as a hoard; if reduced from coin to bullion they are an article of commerce as any other goods may be. As long, therefore, as paper will answer the purposes of circulation as well as gold & silver coin, it seems advantageous to the country to have a cheap instead of a dear circulation; to transact their business at a small expence instead of a large expence.

Redesdale seemingly endorsed the 'real bills' doctrine of anti-bullionists by doubting that the Bank had produced an immoderate amount of paper, for 'If paper be employed only in real dealing so much only can be issued as the necessity of dealing requires'.²²⁷

Henry Beeke was another indirect source of information, writing two letters to Herries in September 1810. One commended the writings of Jasper Atkinson, a government pamphleteer and critic of bullionists and manufacturing. The second admitted giving Atkinson assistance with his pamphlet, because of their mutual connection to Vansittart. Beeke then continued:

²²⁷ Harrowby MSS, Vol. XVI, fo. 74-8: Redesdale to Harrowby, 30 Sep. 1810.

I am going to use strong Language respecting the Report & the Committee. The former is drawn up with considerable & even perplexing Ingenuity, but yet I must say it is one of the most ill-founded, nonsensical, contradictory & mischeivous [sic] Publick Papers that I ever had the Lot to examine,

Had you not one Person! in the Committee from your Side of the House to ask a few Common Sense Questions? Is it possible that Henry Thornton could sit quiet and allow a Report to appear of such a Complexion? But he is connected, closely connected, with the County Banking System.

Beeke thought the criticism of the banking system ‘peculiarly inapplicable’ to the Bank of England. He argued that forcing the Bank to buy gold in Britain would ‘by diminishing the Means of Remittance ... increase the unfavorable [sic] Course of Exchange!’ Instead the Bank should endure the loss of importing foreign bullion.²²⁸ Therefore several trusted sources, including Perceval’s brother-in-law, were encouraging his opposition to convertibility. These experiences and sources therefore shaped Perceval’s view, before he read Sinclair’s and Huskisson’s pamphlets. He drafted a review, unfortunately missing, of Huskisson’s piece for the *Quarterly Review*, unmentioned in Gray’s account and probably unknown by him because he did not view Canning’s papers. It was rejected by the *Quarterly*’s pro-bullionist, independently-minded editorial team.²²⁹ The anti-bullionist cause was augmented by the scribblings of government employees, such as Jasper Atkinson and George Chalmers. Most significant was John Herries’ contribution. Given their connection,

²²⁸ BL, Add MS 47415, fo. 39: Beeke to Herries, 13 Sep. 1810, f. 40, idem, 27 Sep. 1810.

²²⁹ Ibid., Add MS 89143/1/1/38: George Ellis to Canning, 10 Dec. 1810.

and similarities between the structure of Perceval's notes on bullion and Herries' pamphlet,²³⁰ we can fairly surmise that this work was close to being an official government response.

A fourth possible distinction between Perceval and Canning arose from the latter's alarm at the perceived conversion of many, including Vansittart, to permanent inconvertibility.²³¹ Canning rightly thought that Vansittart's counter-resolutions were concocted with Perceval's involvement.²³² These declared a Parliamentary imprimatur in favour of continuing inconvertibility. During these debates Perceval reiterated the importance of war. He also cited a discrepancy between practice and theory by contradicting Gresham's Law that bad money drives out good:

It had been laid down as a principle, that if there were two species of currency in a country, and that the one was depreciated, the one that was depreciated would soon drive the other out; but however plausible that proposition appeared in theory, it was not true in fact. At the period which had been so often alluded to, when our silver was so very much depreciated, how did it happen that we retained our gold? If the principle laid down was correct, our gold must have all disappeared.²³³

Perceval was also not averse to paper currencies. He wrote in July 1810 to Marquis Wellesley:

²³⁰ Ibid., Add MS 49177, fo. 203: 'Admitted Facts' on the bullion issue, compared with Herries, *A Review of the Controversy*, pp. 1-2.

²³¹ PD, 1811, xix, 1079.

²³² NRS, GD249/2/6/5: Canning to Lord Binning, 5 Jul. 1811; BL Add MS 89143/1/1/38: George Ellis to Canning, 3 Nov. 1811; TNA, PRO 30/9/15, Box 2: Vansittart to Abbot, 29 Apr. 1811.

²³³ PD, 1811, xx, 125.

I think you should tell your Brother to bring again under the Consideration of the Spanish Government the necessity of the issue of a paper circulation, managing [?] the growing revenues of the State for it, and making the paper recoverable in payment for the duties & taxes – no nation in modern times ever before attempted anything like a revolutionary contest without having recourse to it, and Spain should at least attempt it.²³⁴

Two years previously Huskisson had favoured forcing Spain to adopt a paper currency.²³⁵ His new hostility echoed the wariness of Austrian paper money expressed by George Ellis to his close friend Canning.²³⁶ This did not make the government hostile to convertibility in peacetime. Despite Herries emphasising the prosperity which paper money had brought during war, he expressed sympathy for restoring convertibility post-bellum.²³⁷ Nonetheless Perceval was evidently happier with war-time paper currencies than Canning or Huskisson.

Gold coin and bank-note bills

Following the bullion debates in May 1811, ministers were content with the outcome. The Foxite enthusiast for political economy, Lord King, responded to Horner's defeat by demanding rent in guineas, gold, or the real-value equivalent (not the face-value) in depreciated bank-notes. The initial government response was to ignore him.²³⁸ But their hand was forced by the radical Earl Stanhope, whose bill introduced on 27 June 1811 required that bank-notes be accepted at face-value. Historians such as Fetter and Gambles have generally

²³⁴ BL, Add MS 37395, fo. 330-1: Perceval to Marquis Wellesley, 14 July 1810.

²³⁵ Holland (Perceval) Papers C.14: Huskisson to Perceval, 2 Oct. 1808.

²³⁶ BL, Add MS 89143/1/1/38: George Ellis to Canning, May 1809.

²³⁷ Herries, *A Review of the Controversy*, pp. 87-90.

²³⁸ NLS, MS 3796, fo. 1: Perceval to Rose, 23 June 1811.

overlooked the subsequent debates, which lasted longer than the bullion debates. We shall therefore consider them in detail. These debates differed because a partisan clash erupted. Consequently Canning and Huskisson abstained in 1811, though they opposed Perceval in 1812. Secondly there was no repeat of the bullion debate's arguments over defining political economy. Instead the debates focused on the applicability of economic theory to economic policy. Debate also turned on the empirical questions of whether the currency had depreciated and how viable resumption was. Thirdly, its sequel also incorporated Ireland into the debate, as the law was extended to Ireland.

The 1811 debates over Stanhope's bill differed from the bullion debates by being fundamentally partisan affairs. Privately Canning thought the 'increase [in currency] now taking [place] is ruinous', but feared that opposing Stanhope's bill would appear partisan against the government, because the subject was assuming 'a regular party complexion'.²³⁹ Sheridan, who idiosyncratically endorsed restrictions, mournfully remarked that 'party-feeling had run high on this subject ... Every one was full of his own theory'.²⁴⁰ Fontana has suggested that the Foxite leaders were disengaged from the subject, not speaking in the bullion debates of May 1811.²⁴¹ But two months later they were enthusiastically involved. Indeed, the Foxites hyperbolically alleged Perceval had 'professed his conversion to the code of Robespierre' by admitting that bank-notes might become legal tender.²⁴²

The debates chiefly concentrated on well-worn questions: was the currency depreciated and could gold be procured to make resumption practicable? However, the arguments employed differed from the bullion debate in being primarily grounded in figures not theories. Grenville censured the Board of Trade's trade licences, and Lauderdale charged

²³⁹ NRS, GD249/2/6, fo. 5: Canning to Lord Binning, 5 July 1811.

²⁴⁰ *PD*, 1811, xx, 1095-6.

²⁴¹ Fontana, *Politics of Commercial Society*, pp. 121, 127.

²⁴² *PD*, 1811, xx, 889.

ministers with having ‘confessed themselves uninformed upon one of the most important and interesting parts of political science’. But opponents primarily sought, through George Johnstone’s lengthy speech at third reading, to disprove the key government argument against depreciation, namely that Europe was ‘hermetically sealed against British commodities’. Export statistics, not Smith’s prose, were quoted against the bill.²⁴³

Perceval and his ministers (Liverpool, Bathurst, Rose and Harrowby) and the supportive Castlereagh, denied that ‘depreciation’ had happened. They had five rebutting arguments. First, other factors explained the high price of commodities such as corn. Rose blamed the Corn Laws, whilst Harrowby and Castlereagh blamed increased taxation. Secondly, Rose argued that prices in Europe equalled Britain’s; whilst Bathurst cited the price of iron, wood, tallow, and cotton, to show the falling prices of domestically-produced products since 1808. Thirdly, they argued that gold was hard to procure, thereby rendering resumption impracticable. Napoleon had stymied European trade, bullion had been sent to support the struggle against him, and South America was saturated with British goods. Even if Britain could send goods to France, Perceval asked, ‘would she not propose to us to take her brandy and claret in exchange’ instead of sending bullion? More reassuringly Perceval asserted ‘that at no antecedent period was the gold more plentiful or cheaper than it was at present’. Fourthly, Rose quoted statistics showing that the total ‘circulating medium’ had fallen by £13 million compared to 1797 (Johnstone argued that this excluded country bank-notes and therefore that there had been an overall increase of £12 million). To refute the comparison with the French Revolutionary assignats Perceval declared that ‘British issues had never exceeded a third of the annual revenue, whereas in France her issues far exceeded the British national debt’. Finally, Perceval blamed Lord King’s conduct, which ‘had a tendency to produce that sort of artificial depreciation of the Bank paper’ which proved that

²⁴³ Ibid., 823, 877, 1069-70.

no ‘real depreciation’ had occurred.²⁴⁴ The debates had thin attendance, and the government correctly calculated that this empirical approach would convince sufficient members to support them.

The debates of 1812 focused on extending Stanhope’s act to Ireland. The Irish currency had been a vexatious subject since the Union, remaining disunited from Britain’s pound. The imbalance in exchanges had caused the committee of 1804 that presaged the bullion committee. Redesdale complained that year, whilst touring Kilkenny, about the shortage of silver and copper coins, alongside opposing the suppression of small denomination bank-notes.²⁴⁵ Henry Parnell’s 1809 bill to amalgamate the currencies was rejected.²⁴⁶ Ireland was controversially exempt from the 1811 Gold Coin Act because certain northern Irish counties continued exclusively to use coin for transactions, and because Irish MPs were absent.²⁴⁷ Contrastingly the Irish government had wanted action, due to the high price of guineas and the moral and economic harm which exemption would cause.²⁴⁸ When the 1811 Act expired on 25 March 1812, the new act did incorporate Ireland. Frank Fetter, unlike Gray, did touch on these 1812 discussions, but nevertheless hurried through them.²⁴⁹ The debates were again vociferously partisan, though Canning did this time oppose the bill,²⁵⁰ and the government again championed facts over theory.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 812-3, 829, 841, 871, 878, 886-7, 940-1, 969-70, 977-8, 1059, 1086.

²⁴⁵ BL, Add MS 41774A, fo. 145-9: Redesdale to Rose, 11 Oct. 1804.

²⁴⁶ *PD*, 1809, xiv, 75-91.

²⁴⁷ *PD*, 1811, xx, 835, 846, 877, 880, 888, 890, 902, 914, 962, 973, 1016-7; PRONI, T3228/5/58: Ryder to Wellesley Pole, 12 July 1811, T3228/5/59: idem, 13 July 1811.

²⁴⁸ PRONI, T3228/4/18: Richmond to Ryder, 10 July 1811; T3228/5/53: Wellesley Pole to Ryder, 9 July 1810; T3228/5/56: idem, 10 July 1811; T3228/5/57: ‘List of Landlords in the North of Ireland who insist on their rents being paid in gold or the difference in value between gold and bank notes’, c. 11 July 1811.

²⁴⁹ F. Fetter, ‘Legal Tender during the English and Irish Bank Restrictions’, *JPE*, 58 (1950), p. 250.

²⁵⁰ *PD*, 1812, xxii, 295.

Perceval viewed the legislation in a functional manner. Having smiled at Tierney's allegation that English bank-notes were inferior even to French assignats, Perceval stressed that the public supported his proposal.²⁵¹ In 1812 opinion 'out of doors' was universally admitted to favour the legislation.²⁵² Fresh hyperbole was voiced, Robert Morris MP declaring that 'The system of paper circulation was not new, it had been at some period or other attempted by most nations in Europe, and its invariable consequence had been to entail bankruptcy on government, and ruin and misery on thousands of innocent individuals'.²⁵³ Perceval, having dismissed Henry Thornton's endorsement of a 'practical standard' in Ireland, turned to these historical comparisons:

he defied any gentleman from those histories to show him a case, in which the paper currency of any other country bore the slightest analogy or resemblance to that of Britain. It was absurd and most ridiculous to compare them together, or bank notes to the assignats of France. These assignats, within two years after their first issue, had exceeded, by a hundred-fold, all the issues of the bank of England during a long period of years.

His closing statement recapitulated the argument about convertibility causing national ruin, and exhorted the superiority of practice over theory:

But if they took the advice of gentlemen on the opposite side of the House, and called on the Bank to resume its payments in specie, then indeed, it might justly be said, that they were throwing widely and directly open the door to national

²⁵¹ Ibid., 4-5, 9, 11-2.

²⁵² Ibid., 12, 199, 209-11, 499.

²⁵³ Ibid., 196.

ruin and bankruptcy. It was their duty to make the best selection they could for the country, and not reject a measure merely because theoretical objections could be urged against its perfect expediency, while it was allowed, on all hands, that some step was necessary, and no other, at all feasible, was suggested.

In April 1812, Perceval cited economic improvements in the last twelve months since the passing of the English legislation, again contrasting economic theory with alleged economic facts:

During the operation of that act, if the reasoning of the gentlemen opposite was correct, the country ought to have seen a multiplication of paper, a rise in the price of bullion, and a regular depression of the foreign exchanges. But instead of all this, the very reverse was the case. The quantity of paper now in circulation was rather smaller than it was in last April. The exchanges were considerably improved, instead of growing systematically worse ... Instead of gold having risen, it had considerably fallen in price; all which circumstances shewed, that there was a complete distinction between the paper of the bank of England, as connected with the dealings of this House with regard to it, and the paper currency of other nations, which had been held up as a warning to this country. He had also the satisfaction of stating, that notwithstanding the distresses of our manufactures in various parts of the kingdom, the home consumption of excisable articles had rather increased than diminished ... whatever theories might be advanced, they had here the practice before them to prove that, with the circulation as established by law, they could support the revenue as it was.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 206-8, 293-4.

The few MPs voting in 1811-12 disregarded fears about depreciation and assignats. Indeed, they disregarded what subsequently hardened into political economy's monetary principles. For Canning this created a dilemma, articulated in December 1812 when the act was renewed. Canning thought that the bill's 'general principle ... was, without qualification, in direct opposition to all those long-established maxims of political economy, the soundness of which, until the last few years, no man in that House or in the country had ventured to question'. But because the law already existed Huskisson and Canning acquiesced to stop repetitions of Lord King's action.²⁵⁵ Hence the Pittites ultimately accepted war-time inconvertibility and paper-money, whilst foreshadowing their post-war divisions. Significantly, despite the rising public prominence of political economy during these debates, and its contested nature, eventually it receded behind a welter of statistics and factual claims. Perceval and his colleagues preferred to exhort the 'practical man' approach rather than to challenge bullionist economic theory, which ironically contributed to that theory's long-term success.

Conclusion

In assessing Pittite economic policies, we must acknowledge that religious beliefs, namely bolstering the established Church, occasionally intruded onto economic questions. Moreover, Perceval's stipendiary curates bill was one of several exceptions which Pittites made to notions of *laissez-faire* and other declared principles of political economy. These exceptions are explained by war-time exigencies, the need to persuade sceptical politicians, an attachment to totemic policies such as the Navigation Acts and 'colonial system', and the

²⁵⁵ Ibid., xxiv, 238, 279-84.

perception that experience contradicted theory. Explicit in the defence of many of these exceptions was the championing of a different set of priorities. Curates' relations with incumbents should not be driven solely by material self-interest, but a sense of religious duty. Argument that the Navigation Acts ensured the strength of British shipping followed Adam Smith in perceiving the issue as a security concern, with maritime commerce being a training ground for naval seamen. Additionally, 'political economy' remained a contested area, something aptly demonstrated during the bullion debates. Appeals to the authority of economic writers jostled with historical precedents and statistics. Although Beeke exercised influence over some Pittites, and Smith probably swayed the mores of the age, there was no one 'guru' figure. Malthus was castigated by Perceval and dismissed by other Pittites. Nor did 'Christian Political Economy' influence the Pittites.

However, during the bullion debates a difference of opinion was exposed between Canning and Huskisson, and the other Pittites. Alongside political manoeuvring, the former men were happier with economic theory. This split presaged how these 'liberal Tories' were to support resumption against Vansittart, and demonstrates the war-time origins of often subtle differences among the post-war Pittites about bullion and food supplies. Furthermore, the language of debates suggests widening acceptance of principles of non-intervention. In Perceval's case this may not have been strongly theoretical, nor was it a consistent approach. His instinctive willingness to persist with protection for the flourishing iron industry corresponds with his resistance to parliamentary reform. Yet it was present, marking this as an age of transition.

Chapter 5: India, Abolitionism, and the War of 1812

Introduction

This chapter assesses colonial policy during the Portland and Perceval governments. Previous biographers overlooked Perceval's colonial religious policies, made curiously few references to his involvement in abolishing the slave trade, and neglected the renewal of the East India Company charter.¹ This echoes the limited historiography on these aspects of a wider war-time Pittism. Either post-1815 events have predominated, such as post-war international abolitionist efforts;² or the chronological focus has been restricted, for example to the year preceding the East India Company charter renewal of 1813.³ This chapter continues the thesis's recovery of Perceval's piety, particularly his establishmentarianism, and the wider recovery of Pittite policies, which demonstrates the importance of the war years in foreshadowing post-1815 actions. This chapter has three sections, each highlighting these connections. First, it explores the renewal of the East India Company charter, and how Perceval championed Christianity and deplored non-Christian religions in India. Secondly it recovers the Pittite angle on abolishing the slave trade, and the policies pursued from 1807 in West Africa, the West Indies, Britain, and with European powers to turn abolition from law into reality. Thirdly, it examines how far abolitionist impulses motivated the much-debated Orders in Council policy.

¹ D. Gray, *Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister* (Manchester, 1963), pp. 18, 25-7, 99; S. Walpole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval* (2 vols., London, 1874), i, p. 150; ii, p. 122.

² W. Hinde, *George Canning* (London, 1973), pp. 70-1, 107, 152, 340-4, and J. Bew, *Castlereagh: Enlightenment, War and Tyranny* (London, 2011), pp. 219-20, 330, 361, 367-8, 388-9, 392-4, 409, 446-7, 451-2.

³ A. Webster, 'The Political Economy of Trade Liberalization: The East India Company Charter of 1813', *The Economic History Review*, 43 (1990), pp. 404-19.

India

In sixty years the East India Company (hereafter EIC) had moved from a mercantile enterprise into a burgeoning land empire. Preserving this territory from French invasion, rendered possible by Napoleon's alliance with the Ottomans, necessitated wooing Persia,⁴ and keeping a watchful eye on the rise of the Wahhabis in Arabia.⁵ Eventually the January 1809 Anglo-Ottoman Treaty of the Dardanelles removed this threat. This was the backdrop to the Portland and Perceval governments' attempts to tackle the parlous finances of the EIC, and to engage with religious questions in India. Scrutinising these two topics sheds new light on Pittite Indian policy, especially Perceval's religious motivations as a component of it. This section first shows how the EIC charter of 1813 had been in gestation for several years, and was not solely the consequence of mercantile lobbying in 1812-13. Secondly, it demonstrates the importance of Perceval's religious beliefs, including his loathing of idolatry, in supporting Christianity and condemning Hindu religious practices.

The immediate build-up to the renewal of the East India charter in 1813 has of course been studied from the perspective of mercantile lobbying.⁶ Anthony Webster's article and book sheds some light on governmental activities in 1812-13, and states that 'success was already assured by early 1812 when the provincial campaign took off'.⁷ But Webster's account is

⁴ *A Persian at the Court of King George 1809-10* (London, 1988), trans. and ed. M. Cloake.

⁵ BL, Add MS 89143/2/29/3, Folders 4 and 6: especially John Baker's 'Sketch of the origin, progress and present State of the Wahabees'.

⁶ D. Moss, 'Birmingham and the Campaigns against the Orders-in-Council and East India Company Charter, 1812-13', *Canadian Journal of History*, 11 (1976), pp. 173-88; Y. Kumagai, 'The Lobbying Activities of Provincial Mercantile and Manufacturing Interests against the Renewal of the East India Company's Charter, 1812-1813 and 1829-1833', (Glasgow Univ. PhD thesis, 2008).

⁷ Webster, 'East India Company Charter of 1813', p. 406; idem, *The Twilight of the East India Company: The Evolution of Anglo-Asian Commerce and Politics 1790-1860* (Woodbridge, 2009).

mainly limited to 1812, whereas this section argues that the charter's renewal had a far longer gestation than previously recognised. This gestation had two components. First, we shall see that from 1807 the issue of the EIC's debts meant that plans were laid to renew the charter. Secondly, this section highlights Perceval's role in 1812 in determining the details of the commercial terms adopted in 1813.

First, Perceval recognised the importance of charter renewal when he became prime minister. Discussing the Presidency of the Board of Control, the chief Indian ministerial position, Perceval noted that the position 'was an undefined [*sic*] delicate sort of office, requiring, from that very circumstance, great smoothness and conciliation as the new charter was about to be negotiated'.⁸ He also included the president in the new Cabinet, contrary to Portland's normal practice, reflecting Robert Dundas's claim 'that with India now such an important concern in the Empire, it [inclusion in the Cabinet] might be attended with official convenience & advantage'.⁹ Indian affairs remained predominantly the preserve of the Dundas family, with Robert Dundas serving as president for most of Perceval's government. Perceval acknowledged in 1811 that 'Lord Melville of course is master of y^e whole & I have no doubt of his opinion, from y^e attention He has paid to all East India Interests'.¹⁰ In that sense Perceval's ministry continued Pitt's approach. But equally the government was preparing itself for the challenge of the reforms that would accompany the new charter.

The Wellesley brothers' wars and territorial conquests ruined Henry Dundas' prediction in the 1790s that growing commerce would bring the EIC a fiscal surplus. Instead, the Company's debts quadrupled between 1791 and 1810.¹¹ Tackling these debts intertwined with charter renewal, explaining the renewed charter's long gestation period. Robert Dundas

⁸ *Plumer Ward*, i, p. 291.

⁹ NLS, MS 19580, fo. 24: Robert Dundas to Melville, 26 Oct. 1809.

¹⁰ Bodleian, MS Wilberforce c.53 fo. 16: Perceval to Wilberforce 12 July 1811.

¹¹ *Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757-1813*, ed. P. Marshall (London, 1968), p. 84.

argued that peace in India would restore the finances, but that the 1807 budget ‘will exhibit a very considerable, and to some people perhaps an alarming deficiency’.¹² Unhappiness at this debt burden was voiced by Thomas Turton MP, in phraseology resonant of Disraeli’s later lament that: ‘We had nothing to expect from India, except an additional load of debt. India was a mill-stone about the neck of England, and would eventually be the ruin of it’.¹³ George Rose, reflecting on the costs of Indian possessions, commented: ‘I am inclined to think we will wish we had never possessed a Territory in that Country beyond our Factories’.¹⁴ The parlous state of the Indian finances required a committee, especially to avoid the impression that the public was ‘to be taxed for the support of India’.¹⁵ Four reports on Indian finances were produced by a select committee sitting from 1810 to 1812. The debts strengthened calls to curtail the EIC’s commercial hegemony, an important possible change to the charter. The Pittites’ motivation to act was partly political. Criticism greeted the issuing of bonds for the EIC without their producing accounts in 1807 and 1808.¹⁶ In August 1808 Dundas informed Perceval that parliamentary aid could only be secured when accompanied by

alterations in the present System of their Trade. The renewal of their Charter is highly expedient for many reasons, and would probably reconcile the Company to other necessary sacrifices, and if a battle must be fought in Parliament next session respecting India in detail, the opportunity ought not to be lost of fighting for some useful purpose to the Country as well as to the Company.¹⁷

¹² NLS, MS 59, fo. 4: Robert Dundas to Perceval, 11 May 1807.

¹³ *PD*, 1810, xvii, 646.

¹⁴ BL, Add MS 42774B, fo. 270: Rose’s memorandum on public finances.

¹⁵ *Wellington*, v, p. 394.

¹⁶ *PD*, 1807, ix, 833-5, 907-9; 1808, xi, 68-79.

¹⁷ NLS, MS 59, fo. 106: Dundas to Perceval, 10 Aug. 1808.

Dundas's accompanying paper of proposed resolutions constituted the framework for reforms up to 1812. Non-EIC ships would be permitted to trade with India. There would be 'a free Trade of Export and Import to and from India (subject to higher duties in Foreign than in British vessels) with all parts of Asia, Africa and America, and the Mediterranean', except for China. To reduce the debt Dundas proposed 'the gradual transfer of the Indian Debt to England, and the unalienable appropriation of an annual Sum for payment of the Interest, and a Sinking Fund, amounting together to not less than seven per cent on the Capital so transferred'. The only deviation from the commercial arrangements enacted in 1813 was that, under Dundas' plan, imports would continue to enter EIC warehouses, thereby restricting their entry to London.¹⁸ In October 1808 Dundas floated the idea of renewing the EIC charter immediately with commercial reforms that would justify public aid to the Company.¹⁹ EIC directors wanted to separate any assisting loan from charter renewal. They were temporarily successful, the government's inaction probably stemming from Parliamentary considerations. Renewing the charter in 1812 was considered by Lord Liverpool 'to be the troublesome question from its details, though not of the character of a political contest between political parties'.²⁰ Even more problematic would have been acting before the committee on Indian finance had cleared some political brushwood. However, considering the pre-1812 discussions shows how lobbying merchants of 1812-13 were already pushing at an open door.²¹

Kumagai and Webster have both stressed the role of George Rose in 1812 in ensuring that goods could be imported to ports beyond London.²² They omitted, however, that in 1809

¹⁸ Ibid., fo. 108: proposed resolutions, 10 Aug. 1808.

¹⁹ Ibid., fo. 144: Dundas to Perceval, 20 Oct. 1808.

²⁰ *Colchester*, iii, p. 405.

²¹ Ibid., fo. 141: Dundas to Perceval, 30 Sep. 1808.

²² Webster, *Twilight of the East India Company*, pp. 58-9; Kumagai, 'Lobbying Activities', pp. 92-3.

Rose had voiced dissatisfaction with India: there was a lack of manufacturing exports, the whole trade was loss-making except for tea and indigo, and Indian cotton manufactures ‘come in direct competition with the Cotton Manufactures of this Country, which is become a Staple in it’. Worse still, individual riches repatriated from India ‘have been productive of much more Evil than Good; for they have certainly had a considerable effect in reducing the value of Money’.²³ Rose undoubtedly influenced the negotiations of April and May 1812. Nevertheless, the chief commercial reform, permitting private trade to India, had already been determined by 1808. The one remaining sticking point was whether to allow Indian trade to outports, beyond London. Here something more can be said for Perceval’s involvement. As Chancellor, Perceval’s main concern was ensuring the collection of customs at these outports. He was directly lobbied by mercantile delegations.²⁴ Melville recognised the need to ensure that ‘I discussed previously all the points with M^r Perceval’ on the charter before writing to the EIC directors.²⁵ By 3 April 1812 Rose declared to Melville that ‘the opening the Trade to India must now I conceive be un-avoidable’.²⁶ London buyers and dealers of Indian piece and cotton goods, having conversed with Perceval and fearing that he supported opening the outports, desperately urged a compromise of requiring goods be landed in London before sailing onwards. They denounced the proposed change, in revealing terms, as ‘this great commercial revolution’.²⁷ Their attempts failed. Minutes of a meeting held two days before Perceval’s death record that Perceval explained ‘That it had not been decided to what Ports the Ships from India should be allowed to return, but the principal Ports of England Ireland and Scotland, would certainly be included’.²⁸ Perceval’s

²³ BL, Add MS 42774B, fo. 270: Rose’s memorandum on public finances.

²⁴ Kumagai, ‘Lobbying Activities’, pp. 90-1.

²⁵ BL, Loan 57/5, fo. 449: Melville to Bathurst, 6 Apr. 1812.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, fo. 450: Rose to Melville, 3 Apr. 1812.

²⁷ BL, Add MS 38410, fo. 72: Thomas Brown to Perceval, 25 Apr. 1812.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 81: minutes of 9 May 1812 meeting.

assassination temporarily halted the discussions, but most of the 1813 charter's commercial details had been determined. Taking a wider chronological focus than previous scholarship highlights how renewing the charter had dominated Pittite thinking towards the EIC long before 1812.

The second Indian issue which exercised the Pittites, especially Perceval, was religious toleration. How much freedom should be accorded to Christian missionaries, should there be an ecclesiastical establishment as in Nova Scotia and Quebec, and how should Indian religious practices be treated? Jörg Fisch has documented the vigorous pamphlet debate about Indian missionaries in 1807-9.²⁹ Penelope Carson has provided an overview of attitudes towards missionaries in India and Jamaica, including contrasting the attitudes of evangelicals with Marquis Wellesley, but Perceval has a walk-on part.³⁰ Previous biographers, notably Gray, failed to link Perceval's policies with his piety, causing this aspect to be overlooked. But Perceval's religious beliefs did guide his approach and therefore government policy. Perceval's actions also reaffirm the importance to him of the established Church, which an evangelical characterisation of him risks under-emphasising.

Perceval's overarching motive appears to have been fear of providential punishment. In March 1807 he speculated on policies that brought down God's wrath of Britain: 'the neglect of our Religion ... unquestionably in those large halves of the world, which are under our dominion are of that description, I much fear, & with great reluctance believe'.³¹ This echoed Wilberforce's view, that if the Gospel were barred from India God would use a 'French army in breaking down the barriers we had vainly and wickedly been rearing, and

²⁹ J. Fisch, 'A Pamphlet War on Christian Missions in India 1807-1809', *Journal of Asian History*, 19 (1985), pp. 22-70.

³⁰ P. Carson, 'The British Raj and the Awakening of the Evangelical Conscience: The Ambiguities of Religious Establishment and Toleration, 1689-1833', in B. Stanley (ed.), *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Richmond, 2001), pp. 45-70; idem, *The East India Company and religion, 1698-1858* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 96-7, 111, 126, 273.

³¹ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 15: speech draft Mar. 1807.

thus open a passage by which Christian light might shine upon that darkened land'.³²

Spreading the gospel to India through missionaries was the chief way to abate this Divine ire.

Wilberforce tried to introduce an ecclesiastical establishment into India in 1793, being frustrated by opposition from the EIC's Court of Directors, and in Parliament by Fox.

Missionaries were blamed for the Vellore mutiny by sepoys in 1806. The Indian merchant

Thomas Twining contended in 1807 that the only threat to British rule came from 'a

convulsion proceeding from religious sources', owing to Indians' attachment to their faiths:

'They think as much of their Religion, as we of our Constitution. They venerate their Shastah

and Koran, with as much enthusiasm as we our Magna Charta'.³³ Twining's efforts were

augmented by Sydney Smith's typically forthright assault on 'Indian missions' that blasted

evangelicals: 'Why are we to send out little detachments of maniacs to spread over the fine

regions of the world the most unjust and contemptible opinion of the gospel?'³⁴

John Ward commented in 1806 that 'from its first establishment to the present day [the EIC] has never taken a single step towards the propagation of the Gospel'.³⁵ Perceval

therefore had to resist EIC attempts to curb missionaries, writing in December 1807 to

Wilberforce: 'I am fully impressed with the necessity of setting the face of government

against the offensive and abominable project of interdicting the circulation of religious

knowledge in India, and I believe the Board of Control are impressed with the same

feeling'.³⁶ In January 1808 Wilberforce declared that 'Perceval has stood our friend' against

the opposition of the Court of Directors.³⁷ In August 1808 Perceval intervened to soften an

³² R Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (5 vols., London, 1838), iii, p. 359.

³³ T. Twining, *A Letter to the Chairman of the East India Company on the Danger of Interfering in the Religious Opinions of the Natives of India* (London, 1807), pp. 29-30.

³⁴ S. Smith, *The Works of Revd. Sydney Smith* (London, 1869), pp. 113-38.

³⁵ *Letters to 'Ivy' from the first Earl of Dudley* ed. S. Romilly (London, 1905), p. 36.

³⁶ *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce* eds. R. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce (2 vols., London, 1840), ii, p. 128.

³⁷ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 359.

anti-missionary despatch to the Governor-General Lord Minto drafted by Robert Dundas.³⁸

Wilberforce was a regular lobbyist of the government, remonstrating to Castlereagh about the removal of schoolmasters from Ceylon in September 1808.³⁹ Perceval was markedly more sympathetic than either Robert Dundas or Marquis Wellesley. Dundas wanted missionaries to proceed ‘slowly & Cautiously in preaching to the natives’. Wellesley ‘seemed to think that Gov^t sh^d be neutral, & that such a step w^d be departing in a measure from the neutrality’.⁴⁰ In 1813 Wellesley endorsed an Indian church establishment whilst arguing that missionaries, although not dangerous, were ineffectual.⁴¹ Perceval’s interest in the religious aspects of Indian affairs was further piqued by the clergyman Claudius Buchanan, who had been in India from 1797 to 1808, primarily acting as vice-provost of the Fort William College, Calcutta. In 1806-7 he toured South India, which underpinned his *Christian Researches in Asia*. His hostile descriptions of Hindu religious practices subsequently influenced Perceval. Although supportive of missionaries, Buchanan also supported an ecclesiastical establishment in India, an approach that enjoyed greater support within the British government. In April 1812 Buchanan sent Perceval his ‘Prospectus of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for India’, receiving in reply ‘a very kind letter, in which he [Perceval] professes to have “a respect for my character and exertions”’.⁴²

Events in 1811-12 furnish further evidence showing Perceval’s sympathy towards missionaries, his Anglicanism, and a new concern about Indian religious practices. In March 1811 prudence had been Perceval’s watchword. He stated in Parliament ‘that government should abstain from openly exerting itself to further the cause of Christianity, lest they should

³⁸ *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, ii, p. 139.

³⁹ Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, pp. 379-80.

⁴⁰ Regent’s Park, The Angus Library, Oxford, Fuller Papers Box H1/1: Fuller to W. Ward, 17 and 19 July 1807

⁴¹ *PD*, 1813, xxv, 697.

⁴² C. Buchanan, *Memoirs of Life and Writings of the Rev Claudius Buchanan* (2 vols., Oxford, 1817), ii, p. 295.

be represented to the people as attempting to impose upon them a new religion'.⁴³ This caution was understandable given the criticism of the 'Saints' for their championing of missionaries by MPs such as Michael Prendergast.⁴⁴ Otherwise it was out-of-character with his private views, highlighting the differences between his private and public pronouncements. That he sympathised with spreading Christianity was detailed by a eulogising, anonymous, self-professed acquaintance of Perceval:

HE assisted, likewise, in the propagation of Christianity, by a diffusion of the holy scriptures: and in the change which he recently made, or rather contemplated, in the charter of a great body, it was his intention to have opened the most fertile part of the globe, not merely to the trade, but to the religion and morality of Europe. He never admitted, for a moment, the principle, that the interests of commerce were to be preferred to the interests of religion; and that a pagan and barbarous people were not to be civilized and christianized, lest they should become more difficult to be governed, and less lucrative to their masters.⁴⁵

Wilberforce, believing in February 1812 that Perceval would support a 'moderate plan', urged the importance of securing 'the entrance of missionaries' and suggested a 'declaration of principles' modelled on Wilberforce's two resolutions of 1793. These had declared it Parliament's duty to promote Christianity in India, and required the EIC to send out 'schoolmasters, and Persons approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury ... for the Religious and Moral Improvement of the Native Inhabitants of the British Dominions in India'.⁴⁶

⁴³ *PD*, 1811, xix, 474.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xx, 746-7, 758-9.

⁴⁵ [Anon], *A Funeral Discourse on the Death of the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval, &c* (London, 1812), p. 46.

⁴⁶ *JC*, 48 (1793), pp. 778, 792.

Before Perceval's murder progress was being made. Wilberforce reported after a meeting in late April that Perceval was 'very pleasing'.⁴⁷ The Revd Andrew Fuller described how Perceval told Dissenting delegates on 9 May 1812 that 'He was not for bringing Religious rights into discussion, before the house, but as the charter w^d allow various privileges to traders he thought it must extend protection to them all, amongst whom religious people w^d be included'.⁴⁸ Perceval was lobbied by the same nonconformists and Wesleyans who concurrently pushed him about nonconformist rights, which Wilberforce feared risked alienating him and other establishmentarians.⁴⁹ They subsequently stated that he had agreed 'that no right of residence should be conferred on mercantile men which schoolmasters and missionaries should not equally enjoy'.⁵⁰ Although Perceval sympathised with missionaries, these negotiations testify to his establishmentarian preference. Revealingly, the report and resolutions prepared for a meeting with Perceval and Lord Buckinghamshire in May 1812 were to be 'in Church of England way'.⁵¹ These episodes testify both to Perceval's support of Christianity overseas, and to his Anglicanism. As with the commercial clauses, Perceval's position presaged Lord Liverpool's final decision, which saw a bishopric established at Calcutta.

Amid these charter negotiations Perceval articulated very revealing concerns about Indian religious practices in a letter drafted in December 1811 to Lord Melville, evidently intended to influence dispatches to Lord Minto. Surprisingly no scholar has previously used this letter. Gray was seemingly unaware of it; nor did Nancy Cassels' article about concurrent

⁴⁷ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iv, pp. 13, 22.

⁴⁸ Regent's Park, Fuller Papers Box H1/2: Fuller to Joshua Marshamn, 15 May 1812.

⁴⁹ BL, Add MS 38410, fo. 68: Thomas Pellatt and John Wilks to Perceval, 22 Apr. 1812; John Rylands Library, MAW MS 6/67/78: Butterworth to Perceval, nd; Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iv, pp. 13-15.

⁵⁰ BL, Add MS 38410, fo. 242: Butterworth to Liverpool, 1 Apr. 1813.

⁵¹ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iv, p. 22.

British debates over the pilgrim tax mention it.⁵² Melville only replied on 23 April 1812, after apparent prompting by Perceval, and having discussed the issue with the Company.

Perceval's death, coupled with the distraction of charter renewal, precluded further action.

Perceval's letter highlights three significant factors. First, he was worried about 'Idolatry', and wanted to prevent 'superstitious' practices such as widow-burning. Perceval argued through analogy against accepting the practice on religious grounds:

if we had subdued a nation whose Religious faith require the immolation to the God of War of all the prisoners made by this subduing, I suppose when we employed that soldiery that we should not hesitate to rescue from their superstition the unhappy prisoners whom they might have taken in the battle which they fought under our authority and direction, and I confess I wish to know a little more of the Juggernaut sacrifices before I can satisfy myself that we are not actually implicated in the human sacrifices which are there celebrated.

Perceval also worried about the alleged suicides of Hindu worshippers at Puri. Drawing on Buchanan's hyperbolic account,⁵³ Perceval suggested that worshippers had intentionally let themselves be crushed by the 'Juggernaut Car ... before his admiring worshippers, and in the sight also of the civil & military magistrates'. All these deaths: the alleged suicides, the widow burnings, and 'the aged & infirm [condemned] to the river Gods', were construed by Perceval as murders that should be appropriately punished. The concern about idolatry extended to the tax paid by the visiting pilgrims. This incentivised the EIC and its servants 'to

⁵² N. Cassels, 'The 'Compact' and the Pilgrim Tax: The Genesis of East India Company Social Policy', *Canadian Journal of History*, 7 (1972), pp. 37-49.

⁵³ C. Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia: with notices of the translation of the scripture into the oriental languages* (Cambridge, 1811), pp. 17-31.

encourage their Idolatrous practices’, because ‘the encrease [sic] of that Idolatry would furnish an increase of such revenue, and a diminution of it a loss’. Secondly, we see Perceval’s concerns about providential wrath. Though his appeals were partly to ‘humanity and religion ... I really feel so strongly upon the national guilt which I conceive to be incurred by these proceedings [alleged human sacrifices]’. Thirdly, as a government minister Perceval recognised practical obstacles existed to suppressing these activities, notably his lack of information, the need for revenue, and difficulties in preventing sati. The letter was partly a request for further information, including how much revenue would be lost by abolishing the pilgrim tax. He impressed on Melville his wish for an inquiry into these practices.⁵⁴ It is striking that his religiosity did mean that he was prepared to sacrifice revenue to diminish ‘idolatry’.

Perceval’s letter is interesting for the issues discussed, and that he raised them. The pilgrim tax had already exercised evangelical members of the Court of Directors, Charles Grant and Edward Parry, who complained about it in 1808.⁵⁵ The revenue it yielded ensured that it continued until 1833.⁵⁶ Sati was not outlawed in Bengal until 1829, and not banned throughout India until 1861. That the prime minister thought it worthwhile to urge action against these practices, amid myriad competing, often urgent, demands emphasises the importance of religion in Perceval’s worldview. The danger of providential wrath made tackling these problems vital. Perceval was reacting to reading Buchanan’s works. But that he was reading Buchanan, took him seriously, desired confirmation of his veracity, and

⁵⁴ BL, Add MS 31230, fo. 220-33: Perceval to Melville, 28 Dec. 1811 (draft); second version of the letter Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXII.69: Perceval to Melville nd; idem G.38: Melville to Perceval, 23 Apr. 1812.

⁵⁵ Wilberforces, *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, ii, pp. 138-9.

⁵⁶ K. Ingham, ‘The English Evangelicals and the Pilgrim Tax in India, 1800-1862’, *JEH*, 3 (1952), pp. 191-200.

advocated action, shows a different approach to the old Indian hands in government, Dundas and Wellesley. It made him unique among contemporary prime ministers.

Slave Trade

In 1818 the embittered former Chief Justice of the Sierra Leone Vice-Admiralty Court, Robert Thorpe, condemned Perceval and Wilberforce's war-time abolitionist efforts:

Nothing, however, was done to advance the cause he professed to advocate; Mr. Perceval supported the [African] Institution, Mr. Wilberforce supported his administration, and in an annual lamentation bewailed the deplorable condition of the slaves. Popularity was increased, England was deluded, and Africa neglected.⁵⁷

Thorpe's criticisms have been followed by a surprising historiographical inattention to Perceval's involvement in abolishing and suppressing the slave trade. This is despite the copious literature on the slave trade and its abolition; and despite a shift away from hagiographically lauding the Saints. There has been animated debate over the competing motives – humanitarianism, economic self-interest, or providential concerns – that motivated abolitionism.⁵⁸ Focusing on British politicians, the humanitarian motives of the Foxites and

⁵⁷ R. Thorpe, *A View of the Present Increase of the Slave Trade* (London, 1818), p. 27.

⁵⁸ R. Anstey, 'A Re-Interpretation of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade, 1806-1807', *EHR*, 87 (1972), pp. 304-42; J. Coffey, 'Tremble Britannia!': Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1758-1807', *EHR*, 127 (2012), pp. 844-81. B. Hilton, '1807 and All That: Why Britain outlawed her Slave Trade', in D. Peterson (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Athens, Ohio, 2010), pp. 77-9; W. Palmer, 'How Ideology Works: Historians and the Case of British Abolitionism', *HJ*, 52 (2009), pp. 1039-51.

Grenville who enacted abolition in 1807 have been examined.⁵⁹ Patrick Lipscomb emphasised Canning's attempt in 1802 to use the banning of the slave trade to Trinidad to embarrass Addington.⁶⁰ Various historians have detailed Canning's and Castlereagh's efforts post-1815 and those of their Victorian successors to nurture international abolition.⁶¹ J. J. Sack has stressed the earlier abolitionist impulses of 'Tory' clerics and newspapers in the 1770s.⁶² Significantly, Perceval is omitted from this scholarship, despite being the foremost abolitionist in power pre-1812.

Perceval's support of abolitionism was steadfast and significant. This section first highlights Perceval's role in abolishing the slave trade, both through his speeches and his private lobbying of Pitt. He was usefully positioned as Attorney-General to prohibit slave trading to the former Dutch Guiana, and played a behind-the-scenes role in ensuring the passage of abolition. His abolitionism, though lacking Pitt's eloquence, sharply contrasted with most senior Pittites' opposition. Before 1807 the Pittites were disunited over abolition. Castlereagh, Eldon, Bathurst, Hawkesbury, and Rose had expressed reservations. Redesdale vigorously cited the Haitian Revolution to Perceval as demonstrating the dangers of 'philanthropists'.⁶³ Conversely Pitt had been a sometimes eloquent, sometimes ineffectual supporter of Wilberforce's endeavours. Canning was a steadfast ally, alongside Harrowby,

⁵⁹ A. Kriegel, 'A Convergence of Ethics: Saints and Whigs in British Antislavery', *Journal of British Studies*, 26 (1987), pp. 423-50.

⁶⁰ P. Lipscomb, 'Party Politics, 1801-1802: George Canning and the Trinidad Question', *HJ*, 12 (1969), pp. 442-66.

⁶¹ C. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh 1815-1822* (London, 1925) pp. 454-66; H. Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822-1827: England, the neo-Holy alliance and the New World* (London, 1925), pp. 313-14; L. Bethell, 'Britain, Portugal and the Suppression of the Brazilian Slave Trade: The Origins of Lord Palmerston's Act of 1839', *EHR*, 80 (1965), pp. 761-84; R. Huzzey, 'Gladstone and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', in R. Quinault, R. Swift, R. Windscheffel (eds.), *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 253-66.

⁶² J. Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 163-5, 170-8.

⁶³ BL, Add MS 49188, fo. 112: Redesdale to Perceval, 23 Oct. 1803.

who praised Brougham's 1802 pamphlet for assisting erstwhile opponents to change their votes, and in 1804 assisted with the prohibition of the slave trade to conquered Caribbean islands.⁶⁴ Secondly, it emphasises Perceval's involvement in the post-abolition attempts to suppress the slave trade. We will see how Perceval was considered significant by fellow abolitionists, before examining abolitionist actions in Africa, including the establishment of the West African Squadron and the Sierra Leone Vice-Admiralty Court. Next, we illuminate the abolitionist policies pursued in the Caribbean. This included resisting planter attempts at constitutional reform, whilst supporting the adoption of slave registration in Trinidad. These issues highlighted the divergent views between the government, including Castlereagh and Liverpool as Colonial Secretaries, and the 'West Indian interest'. These two ministers possibly obscure Perceval's own role in government. Their pragmatism contrasted with Perceval's providential view of the slave trade as a national sin. Perceval's Anglicanism manifested itself through his support for Anglican clergy in Berbice. This reinforces the importance of piety to Perceval's politics, his support for proselytising, and his establishmentarian credentials. Thirdly, a chronological gap in the abolitionist historiography is bridged, by recovering the efforts of Perceval and Canning to persuade Spain and Portugal to abolish their slave trades. Overall the section emphasises how, as with India, we can trace the policies pursued by Liverpool's ministry – bolstering slave education, strengthening the West Indian clergy, slave registration, diplomatic efforts at international abolition, and the West African Squadron – to Perceval's government. Perceval's religious motives for action were only occasionally articulated. Nevertheless, Perceval's actions are both important in themselves and for laying the foundations for subsequent British policies.

⁶⁴ Bodleian, MS Wilberforce d.13, fo. 273: Harrowby to Wilberforce, 11 Oct. 1804; idem, d.17/1, fo. 131-2: idem, 25 Sep. 1802.

The abolitionist campaign required foot-soldiers as well as generals. Perceval's role was inferior to prestigious figures such as Clarkson or Wilberforce. Yet he contributed a vote, speeches, and an insider role in government in the years preceding abolition. As a leader of the Pittites in opposition in 1807 he helped ensure Pittite acceptance of Wilberforce's bill. Perceval's motivating force was that the slave trade was a national sin. 'The Existence of the Slave Trade', alongside failing to proselytise at home and abroad, threatened divine vengeance on Britain.⁶⁵ Perceval's role in abolition was partially parliamentary. He probably acted as a teller in 1799 for an abolition bill.⁶⁶ He spoke in support of abolition, with contemporary accounts being fuller than *Parliamentary Debates*.⁶⁷ Often his speeches rebutted earlier opposing arguments, in June 1804 he echoed a common abolitionist claim by questioning whether there was a plan to abolish slavery.⁶⁸ In 1804, and in March 1807, Perceval dismissed the idea of delaying abolition for five years so as to balance the male-to-female slave populations. He refuted claims that abolition could not prevent slave trading, or that a heavy import tax was a preferable deterrent. Perceval argued that now was the opportune moment, because British naval dominance could facilitate suppression, whereas 'when peace is restored, you cannot do it'.⁶⁹

Perceval also assisted the abolitionist cause from his governmental position. Abolitionist efforts in 1805 focused on stopping the resumption of slave trading and the proliferation of slavery to conquered colonies. Perceval persuaded Pitt to pass an Order in Council prohibiting slave trading to recently conquered Dutch Guiana, being described as 'honest, warm, steady, and intelligent, on the subject'. He co-operated with Stephen and

⁶⁵ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 15: draft speech Mar. 1807.

⁶⁶ *JC*, 54 (1799), p. 424.

⁶⁷ For example compare reports of 6 March 1807 debates in *PD*, 1807, ix, 69 and *Substance of the Debates on the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (London, 1808), pp. 200-3.

⁶⁸ *PD*, 1804, ii, 780.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, 553; *Substance of the Debates*, pp. 200-3.

Wilberforce in drafting this Order.⁷⁰ Perceval was also integral to the passage of the Foreign Slave Trade Act in 1806 and to abolition in 1807, reassuring Wilberforce that previously hostile Pittites would not obstruct the measure in the Lords.⁷¹ Perceval was therefore, an unusually conscientious Pittite abolitionist.

Abolitionists were in a minority within the Portland cabinet, shown by Canning's remarks that Perceval was 'the only one of my Colleagues who think precisely as I do' about encouraging Portugal to abolish her slave trade.⁷² Such pessimism was not universally held. Zachary Macaulay boasted that 'I have no doubt that Government will be disposed to adopt almost any plan which we may propose to them, with respect to Africa, provided we will but save them the trouble of thinking'.⁷³ Macaulay's optimism was prescient – the effective working relationship between James Stephen and Perceval was integral to subsequent anti-slave trade policies. We therefore turn from abolition to suppression, tracing the actions taken in Africa, the Caribbean, and in Europe.

Let us begin by elucidating how anti-slave trade policies were formulated and implemented. Formally the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Lords Castlereagh and Liverpool in 1807-12, dealt with colonial affairs. They corresponded with governors, notably in the West Indies and in Sierra Leone (a Crown colony from 1808). Another source of information came through Perceval's correspondence with lawyer and abolitionist James Stephen. Admittedly Stephen's influence may have been exaggerated by the survival of his letters to Perceval. But he clearly mattered. This partially reflected the influence of the 'Saints', through the African Institution, which issued annual reports and spearheaded

⁷⁰ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, pp. 216, 231.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 301.

⁷² BL, Add MS 89143/1/1/118: Canning to Perceval 17 Apr. 1807.

⁷³ R. Thorpe, *A Letter to William Wilberforce, Esq. MP. &c &c &c Containing Remarks on the Reports of the Sierra Leone Company and African Institution: With Hints Respecting the Means by which an Universal Abolition of the Slave Trade Might be Carried into Effect* (London, 1815), pp. 31-2.

abolitionist efforts. Perceval served as a Vice-President until 1811, and normally subscribed £31 10s per annum. The Vice-Presidents, politically, divided between oppositionists such as Grenville and Grey, ‘Saints’ such as Wilberforce and Lord Teignmouth, and the pro-abolitionist Pittites Canning and Perceval.⁷⁴ The Saints continued to influence appointments in Sierra Leone, because of their earlier involvement in the Sierra Leone Company that had founded the colony. On West Indian questions, evangelical MPs dominated the Berbice Crown Land Commission.⁷⁵ A similar would-be predominance on a proposed commission into evasions of the Abolition Act brought criticism from government supporters, and Perceval refused, because it would annoy his parliamentary supporters, to pack the commission with abolitionist opposition politicians.⁷⁶

Stephen’s correspondence with Perceval emphasises Perceval’s significance to abolitionism. Stephen owed his constituency to Perceval’s influence, calling him ‘my Parliamentary Papa’,⁷⁷ and enjoyed considerable access to the colonial office.⁷⁸ Stephen commented in 1809 that on ‘African subjects ... they are not all in your peculiar department, [yet] they have I know a place in your heart; & indeed I consider the Slave trade Department as yours in all its ramifications’.⁷⁹ The same held true for West Indian matters. Stephen reassured Grenville that ‘[Perceval] will I am sure to the full measure of his power, labour to secure & enlarge the benefits of that noble reformation which you so happily affected [*sic*]. Like you he regards that grand interest of religion & humanity, as standing without & above

⁷⁴ *Report of the Committee of the African Institution, Read to the General Meeting on the 15th July 1807* (London, 1807), pp. vii, 83. For subscription see *Fourth Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London, 1810), p. 113.

⁷⁵ *JC*, 67 (1812), pp. 837-8.

⁷⁶ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 168: Stephen to Perceval, 24 Sep. 1810; fo. 175: Stephen to Perceval, 25 Sep. 1810, fo. 176: Stephen to Perceval, 28 Sep. 1810.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, fo. 3: Stephen to Perceval, 31 Aug. 1807.

⁷⁸ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iv, pp. 239-40.

⁷⁹ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 135: Stephen to Perceval, 9 Aug. 1809.

the region of political party'.⁸⁰ Frustratingly few of Perceval's own writings on this subject, particularly to Stephen, have survived, creating an imbalance in the evidence. An exception is an 1801 letter from Perceval to Dudley Ryder, discussing the peace preliminaries agreed with France. Perceval commented: 'as to the French colonies which we ceded, by the peace, I cannot consider the great multiplication and extension of them as encrease [*sic*] of wealth & strength, but rather as the source of expence [*sic*] & weakness'.⁸¹ Given the Caribbean location of most of these colonies his reservations may have derived from his abolitionism. Perceval was subsequently involved with the Berbice land commission,⁸² and confirmed land grants in St Vincent, being condemned as an 'oppressor & Robber' by American loyalist Col. Brown for altering the grant conditions to prevent Brown benefiting from previous, hitherto unknown, improvements.⁸³ Though initiatives often originated with the African Institution and the Saints, they needed government help. Hence, Stephen wrote to Robert Peel, the junior minister at the Colonial Office, on behalf of the persecuted John Wise, who was threatened with enslavement by a St Vincent court. Stephen admitted that having abolitionist sympathisers 'would preclude' Wise from receiving justice in the Caribbean, and urged ministers to send a 'liberal & right construction of the Royal Instructions to the Governor'.⁸⁴ Thus although it often appears that the government merely followed the Saints, exacerbated by the one-sided nature of the surviving Stephen-Perceval correspondence, in practice the two needed each other.

Let us now turn to the actions taken to prevent slave trading from Africa. A naval force was sent to intercept slavers, and a Vice-Admiralty Court established in Sierra Leone which declared slave ships forfeit. Perceval was integral in founding the court. The idea had

⁸⁰ Ibid., Add MS 58998, fo. 151: Stephen to Grenville, 7 Jan. 1808.

⁸¹ Harrowby MSS Vol. VIII, fo. 150: Perceval to Dudley Ryder, Oct. 1801.

⁸² Holland (Perceval) Papers, Bound Volume fo. 30: Charles Long to Perceval, 8 June 1811.

⁸³ BL, Add MS 45036, fo. 80-1: Perceval to Yorke, 3 Oct. 1810.

⁸⁴ Ibid., Add MS 38578, fo. 11: Stephen to Peel, 8 Aug. 1811.

already been floated by Grenville, with support from Zachary Macaulay.⁸⁵ Perceval went further, writing a memorandum to Sir William Scott endorsing a court at Sierra Leone, rather than sending the ships and rescued Africans to the Caribbean. Scott was supportive and the Court was created.⁸⁶ From 1810 the number of slave trade cases tried in Vice-Admiralty courts rose into double digits, albeit only constituting 15% of known voyages.⁸⁷ As Michael Turner has detailed, Sierra Leone's governor, Thomas Thompson, fell out with the government and the 'Saints'.⁸⁸ Similarly frosty relations existed with Robert Thorpe,⁸⁹ explaining his subsequent hostility towards Perceval and Wilberforce, despite Perceval's parliamentary defence of Thorpe in 1811.⁹⁰ Yet Thorpe helped to suppress slave trading through his judicial rulings, taking an expansive interpretation that condemned practically all European slave traders, except the Portuguese, before 1815. Thorpe's judgements followed the precedent of the Privy Council's ruling in the 1809 *Amedie* case, which had required owners to show that their nation's laws permitted the trade. The *Amedie* was an American ship, a nation which had outlawed slave trading, and therefore the ship was condemned.⁹¹

Suppression efforts in Africa occurred beyond Sierra Leone. Abolitionism caused Charles Grant to advocate seizing Mozambique from the Portuguese in 1807.⁹² Governor Farquhar reluctantly suppressed the slave trade on the captured island of Mauritius.⁹³ The

⁸⁵ W. Ackerson, 'The African Institution of London and the Anti-Slavery movement in Great Britain', (Temple Univ. PhD thesis 1999), pp. 79-80.

⁸⁶ Holland (Perceval) Papers, Bound Volume 47: Perceval to Sir William Scott, nd.

⁸⁷ J. Martinez, *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford, 2012), p. 26.

⁸⁸ M. Turner, 'The Limits of Abolition: Government, Saints and the 'African Question'', c. 1780-1820', *EHR*, 112 (1997), pp. 319-57; Ackerson, 'African Institution', pp. 72-109.

⁸⁹ Turner, 'Limits of Abolition', p. 351.

⁹⁰ *PD*, 1811, xix, 740.

⁹¹ T. Helfman, 'The Court of Vice Admiralty at Sierra Leone and the Abolition of the West African Slave Trade', *The Yale Law Journal*, 115 (2006), pp. 1122-56; S. Rees, *Sweet Water and Bitter: The Ships that Stopped the Slave Trade* (Durham NH, 2011), p. 20.

⁹² *Castlereagh*, viii, p. 94.

⁹³ *Further Papers relative to the Slave Trade: viz. the subject of the Slave Trade at the Cape, and at the Isle of France 1812-3* (50), pp. 9-22.

Pittites also supported attempts to replace slave trading with ‘virtuous trade’. The African Institution recommended promoting a new type of cotton seed in West Africa, arguing that African cotton would not compete with British colonial tropical products, that it could replace American cotton if war occurred, and that it would facilitate the reciprocal purchase of manufactured goods.⁹⁴ Lobbying persuaded Perceval to reduce import duties on produce (cotton, ginger, and coffee) from British African colonies to that levied on similar British West Indian imports.⁹⁵ Coleridge contemplated applying to serve on a commission that Perceval sent to West Africa ‘to see what can be done in the way of virtuous Trade’.⁹⁶ The Commission, dispatched in 1808 and reporting in 1812, proposed strengthening the West African coastal forts, doubly significant given the ongoing war between the Ashanti and the Fanti.⁹⁷ They expressed concern about the geographical vastness the West African naval squadron was required to cover. Although Thomas Clarkson optimistically claimed in 1813 ‘that the African Coast is now nearly cleared of Slave-Ships’,⁹⁸ in reality naval forces were insufficient for their assigned task. Initially the twenty-three year old, 32-gun frigate *HMS Solebay*, accompanied by the 18-gun *HMS Derwent*, were dispatched to patrol almost three-thousand miles of coastline. In 1810 and 1812 Wilberforce pushed Charles Yorke, First Lord of the Admiralty, to augment this force.⁹⁹ Reinforcements followed, but they struggled to find slave traders amid the rivers, creeks, inlets and bays.¹⁰⁰ Most of the commissioners consequently recommended restricting cruising to around Sierra Leone.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless the

⁹⁴ *Second Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London, 1808), pp. 13-15.

⁹⁵ *Third Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London, 1809), pp. 28-9; *Fourth Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London, 1810), p. 16.

⁹⁶ *The Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* ed. E. Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956-71), iii, p. 72.

⁹⁷ *JC*, 65 (1810), p. 77, 584; *British Colonial Development*, pp. 486-90.

⁹⁸ Bodleian, MSS Brit. Emp. s/18/C107, fo. 150: Clarkson to John Wadkin, 10 Feb. 1813.

⁹⁹ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 459; iv, p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ B. Edwards, *Royal Navy versus the Slave Traders: Enforcing Abolition at Sea 1808-1898* (Barnsley, 2007), pp. 48-62.

¹⁰¹ *JC*, 67 (1812), pp. 831, 836.

threefold instruments of slave trade suppression – naval force, legal confiscation, and promoting alternative commerce – were established by 1812 with Perceval’s support and involvement.

Efforts in Africa were insufficient to destroy the illegal trade. Action in the Caribbean was also needed. British governors faced the twin challenges of enforcing abolition in slave-owning societies and dealing with cases of cruelty towards slaves. To abolitionists, including Perceval, there was also the goal of evangelising the slaves. Debates often centred on Trinidad, where abolitionists resisted attempts to establish a ‘British constitution’, and championed the registration of slaves. Although James Epstein has recently written on Trinidad during the 1800s, his major focus was events before abolition, notably the trial of Governor Thomas Picton for authorising the torture of Luis Calderon.¹⁰² However, complementing archival material and parliamentary papers, useful correspondence was printed by Vincent Harlow and Frank Madden in one anthology, and Eric Williams in another.¹⁰³ Drawing on these varied sources we can recover the Pittite abolitionist approach to this important island. We will then demonstrate Perceval’s tentative support for Christianising slaves across the West Indies, founded once again on his Anglicanism.

Trinidad posed two significant questions for the government: should there be a ‘British Constitution’ and should slaves be registered.¹⁰⁴ The former debate involved introducing what its advocates called a ‘British constitution’, namely an assembly and

¹⁰² J. Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2012), especially pp. 15-45

¹⁰³ *British Colonial Developments 1774-1834: Select Documents*, eds. V. Harlow and F. Madden (Oxford, 1953); *Documents on British West Indian History, 1807-1833*, ed. E. Williams (Port of Spain, 1952).

¹⁰⁴ Ministers were notably unengaged in the debates over introducing free labourers from Asia in place of slave labour. See *PD*, 1811, xix, 709-11; *Select Committee on Practicality and Expediency of supplying W. India Colonies with Free Labourers from the East 1810-1* (225); Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, pp. 189-216; *The Chinese in the West Indies, 1806-1995: A Documentary History*, ed. W. Lai (Kingston, 1998).

British-style law and judiciary, thereby imitating the institutions of other British Caribbean islands. Following British conquest Trinidad had retained its Spanish penal code, and was under the authority of a governor. A major complication was Trinidad's demographics. Disagreements existed over whether Trinidad's free population was markedly above-average compared to other Caribbean colonies. 1811 figures suggested that slaves constituted roughly two-thirds of the overall population, markedly below average.¹⁰⁵ Contrastingly Chief Justice George Smith estimated that five-sixths of Trinidad's population were slaves, similar to other islands. The estimates did agree that over two-thirds of the free population were non-white. Less than half the white population of Trinidad were British, Catholicism was the majority Christian denomination, and English was absent from Trinidadian courts until 1814.¹⁰⁶ The scheme of introducing a British Constitution preceded abolition. In 1804 the Colonial Secretary Lord Hobart had determined that circumstances did not yet 'warrant the formation of a House of Assembly or the *general* introduction of the British laws and customs as they prevail in the Old Colonies'.¹⁰⁷ Stephen wrote that: 'I know not, the mischiefs springing from these [slave] laws excepted, a source of greater political evils in our small West India Islands, than their having been separately complimented with a pigmy model of the British Constitution'.¹⁰⁸ In early 1810 calls for reform returned, owing to George Smith's application of the Spanish Slave Code, which brought him into conflict with Governor Hislop. In October 1810 petitions calling for action were signed by British settlers, with Hislop's sympathy.¹⁰⁹ Conversely, Stephen claimed that Hislop oppressed free black counter-petitioners.¹¹⁰ Subsequently Liverpool announced to Hislop that the government had blocked the proposal

¹⁰⁵ *Documents on British West Indian History*, pp. 382-3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 382; A. Burns, *History of the British West Indies* (London, 1954), p. 600.

¹⁰⁷ *British Colonial Developments*, p. 90.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies* (London, 1802), p. 190.

¹⁰⁹ *The Times* (4 Dec. 1810), p. 4.

¹¹⁰ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 161: Stephen to Perceval, nd. [autumn 1810]; fo. 182-5, Stephen to Perceval, 20 Oct. 1810.

to establish an assembly. Liverpool stated the atypical circumstances on Trinidad that swayed his decision: most free inhabitants were ‘people of colour’ who would be excluded from political rights, and that ‘the white population consists of a mixture of people of all nations’. Significantly Liverpool also stated that enforcing abolition ‘imposes upon the Government the necessity of keeping within itself every power which may be material for rendering this measure effectual’. We can directly see the link between the constitutional debates and abolition, and how even erstwhile anti-abolitionists were willing to enforce it.¹¹¹

The advocates for reform persisted. In May 1811 Joseph Marryat moved for a copy of Liverpool’s letter to Hislop. Perceval responded that:

if the object was to shew that the British constitution should have been introduced into Trinidad, he would move for a petition of the free people of colour in that island, against the measure presented in July 1810. He would then leave it to the discretion of the hon. gent, whether he would proceed farther in the business.’¹¹²

Marryat’s actions presaged his motion on 13 June 1811 for introducing a British constitution and laws into Trinidad. He concentrated almost entirely on the legal side, reprobating Justice Smith’s implementation of Spanish laws, arguing that those laws crushed press freedom, allowed malefactors to escape, permitted various acts of cruelty against slaves, and prevented non-whites giving evidence against whites. Parliamentary opposition came from three groups: opposition MPs such as Brougham and the Unitarian William Smith, the evangelicals Wilberforce and Stephen, and the non-government Pittites Castlereagh and Canning. Brougham demolished Marryat’s claims about the advantages of applying British laws to the

¹¹¹ *Papers relating to the Island of Trinidad, 1810-1* (184), pp. 1-3.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, xx, 134.

West Indies, for ‘all the true English feeling was left behind’ and there ‘served only as the engine of fraud and oppression’. Castlereagh praised Smith and the government’s action, ‘and thought [that] it would be improper to give power to persons who would be likely to wield it against each other’. Canning declared that introducing a council to Trinidad would replicate British islands where ‘every plan for ameliorating the condition of the slaves was uniformly opposed’.¹¹³ These views reflected wider dissatisfaction with the British West Indies. Stephen argued that ‘the W Indies whom you see here in the Ho. of Commons, or in private circles, are a very different kind of animal, from those who govern slaves in our Islands’.¹¹⁴ Planters were ‘daring adventurers’; the ‘game of sugar planting ... is worse than a South Sea bubble to the colonising nation’.¹¹⁵ British governors often shared these views. The Governor of the Leeward Islands, Hugh Elliott opined of British settlers that ‘To collect from such a society men fit to be legislators, judges or jurymen, is perfectly impracticable’, a comment echoed by the Duke of Manchester on Jamaica.¹¹⁶

The second debate focused on Trinidad was about introducing slave registration, which would check illegal slave importations. It formed an important plank of abolitionist efforts, and because it required government action to be implemented and enforced it again highlights the role that ministers played in suppression. Consequently, Stephen and Wilberforce worked with Castlereagh and Perceval on introducing slave registration in Trinidad. This would precede a registry bill imposing slave registration across the British Caribbean. Trinidad had several attractions as a trial location: it was already seen as a location of experiments (particularly introducing free labourers),¹¹⁷ it had no colonial assembly to present constitutional problems, and consequently registration only required an

¹¹³ Ibid., 610-22.

¹¹⁴ BL, Add MS 49183, fo 19: Stephen to Perceval, 30 Nov. 1807.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. fo. 65: idem, 13 July 1808.

¹¹⁶ Burns, *British West Indies*, pp. 595-6; *Colonial Developments*, pp. 93, 100.

¹¹⁷ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 385.

Order in Council, whereas established British colonies would need parliamentary legislation. If registration worked on Trinidad its extension elsewhere would be easier. Stephen again was a cheerleader, proposing action in autumn 1808.¹¹⁸ The ministerial changes of 1809 delayed this process. Perceval informed Wilberforce that:

Castlereagh's removal from his office, interrupts the business of the Trinidad order respecting registering of slaves, I had talked to him upon the subject, and we had agreed to bring it forward – but it is a question which must now be suspended, till a more settled State of Things.¹¹⁹

In spring 1810 the Saints threatened to introduce a bill ordering slave registration on Trinidad. Whilst regretting this narrower approach, Stephen emphasised to Perceval that:

The same law is there only less urgently necessary not less applicable & proper. But the case of Trinidad is nevertheless so shocking in the eye of humanity, & so dangerous in its example & consequences to the credit & security of abolition principle, that it ought to be remedied if possible without further delay, whatever may be the indirect or collateral consequences.¹²⁰

Perceval managed to delay this measure, proposing instead that an Order in Council would implement registration.¹²¹ Meanwhile in November 1810 Perceval directed that the commissioners of customs heading to the West Indies should enquire 'into the manner in

¹¹⁸ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 144: Stephen to Perceval, 9 Sep. 1809.

¹¹⁹ Duke University, Rubenstein Library, Wilberforce Papers: Perceval to Wilberforce, 26 Sep. 1809.

¹²⁰ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 150: idem, 10 Apr. 1810.

¹²¹ Ibid., fo. 154: idem, nd [c. autumn 1810]; Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 445.

which these Laws [abolishing the Slave Trade] may have been enforced and whether any evasions ... have taken place', and copies of the acts were sent to officials.¹²² Progress over Trinidad registration was slow. Eventually, in January 1812 Perceval headed off potential obstructions by the law officers and pushed through registration in Trinidad by an Order in Council, which required the registration of 'personal slaves' and 'plantation slaves'.¹²³ But Perceval disagreed with Wilberforce's wish to bring forward an immediate general registry bill.¹²⁴ Though promising to support Wilberforce's bill, Perceval proposed waiting a year 'to see how the engine should work in Trinidad' and because 'should it fail in the House of Commons, our measure in Trinidad would start under great disadvantages'. Wilberforce's concern was that Stephen might resign at a dissolution, thereby weakening the abolitionist cause.¹²⁵ Stephen did resign in 1815 when Liverpool's government refused to implement general registration.¹²⁶ A more committed abolitionist such as Perceval probably would have persisted, thereby reducing the ease with which illegal slave trading continued.

Having focused on Trinidad we now turn to Perceval's championing of religious instruction across the Caribbean. The missionary impulse in India that met with Perceval's approval was echoed elsewhere. The Treasury, following Perceval's encouragement, gave money to missionaries in North America to tackle an alleged 'Growth of Profligacy the effect of Irreligion'.¹²⁷ On a personal note, alongside supporting the SPCK and BFBS, Perceval helped the New South Wales (NSW) chaplain Richard Johnson, thereby earning

¹²² TNA, T29/108, fo. 126: minute of Treasury Board meeting, 8 Nov. 1810.

¹²³ See copy in *Seventh Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London, 1813), pp. 45-58.

¹²⁴ S. Romilly, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Samuel Romilly* (3 vols., London, 1840), iii, p. 1.

¹²⁵ Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, iv, p. 20.

¹²⁶ A. John, 'The Smuggled Slaves of Trinidad, 1813', *HJ*, 31 (1988), pp. 365-75; R. Schuyler, 'The Constitutional Claims of the British West Indies', *Political Science Quarterly*, 40 (1925), pp. 1-36.

¹²⁷ TNA, T29/111, fo. 475: minute of Treasury Board meeting, 7 June 1811.

Wilberforce's praise.¹²⁸ Commenting on Bentham's Panopticon scheme, Perceval stressed the importance of education in NSW to save children from imitating their convict parents.¹²⁹ Perceval's zeal made him more active than his fellow Pittites but as Colonial Secretary Castlereagh also supported bolstering the provision of clerics and schoolmasters in NSW.¹³⁰ Similarly Liverpool urged clergymen 'of talents & character' to serve as chaplains in Ceylon.¹³¹ The same ideas are evident in the Caribbean. Action was partly necessary due to the inadequacies of the established Church. The Wesleyan Thomas Coke claimed in 1808 that aside from one missionary sent by Bishop Porteus, 'The regular Clergy of the Island ... do not consider it as their duty to instruct the Blacks, but confine their ministerial instructions entirely to the Whites'.¹³² The planters' immorality combined with their hostility to preaching to slaves. Moravians and Methodists, who did proselytise, were perceived as stirrers of revolt. Governor Bentinck commented that the missionaries were viewed as 'inveterate enemies of the Established Church, as ignorant and hotheaded fanatics anxious to convert everything into persecution'.¹³³ This contrasted with a more supportive view of the Moravians found in the Cape Colony.¹³⁴ Only the royal veto frustrated attempts in 1803, 1807-8 and 1811 by West Indian legislatures to suppress Methodists. On each occasion, Dissenters and Methodists were at the forefront of lobbying against the measure. In 1803 Alexander Knox lobbied his friend Lord Castlereagh.¹³⁵ In 1808 Jamaican Wesleyan Methodists, seeking to demonstrate their political reliability, sent Perceval examples of loyal black Methodists. Coke lobbied both

¹²⁸ Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 458.

¹²⁹ TNA, H.O. 42/48, fo. 180: Perceval to Charles Long, 31 Dec. 1802; PRO 30/9/33, fo. 61: Perceval to Abbot, 1 Jan. 1803.

¹³⁰ *Castlereagh*, viii, p. 127.

¹³¹ C. Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool*, K.G., *Late*

First Lord of the Treasury (3 vols., London, 1868) i, p. 310.

¹³² Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXIV.16a: Revd Dr Coke to Perceval, 28 Mar. 1808.

¹³³ *Documents on British West Indian History*, p. 240.

¹³⁴ *British Colonial Development*, p. 597.

¹³⁵ *Castlereagh*, iv, p. 289.

Perceval and Liverpool about the persecution.¹³⁶ In 1811 William Smith joined with Wilberforce and Stephen in pressurising the government (specifically Peel) over laws in Jamaica and Demerara. Smith subsequently warned of the ‘persecuting spirit which seems to be gaining ground’ on Jamaica.¹³⁷ Four years previously Stephen and the Attorney-General Vicary Gibbs had written a legal opinion condemning as unlawful an ordinance of Kingston Corporation, in Jamaica, banning Dissenters from even having family worship in their houses.¹³⁸

The government’s response to this pressure was twofold. First, the hostility fitted within a pattern of worsening relations with legislatures following abolition. The Duke of Manchester thought that the planters were trying to get ‘into their own hands the effective power over this Colony’.¹³⁹ Reducing this animosity required time, which would reconcile the planters to abolition. Secondly, the government reiterated its commitment to religious toleration. Liverpool wrote to all the Crown colonies in November 1811, declaring that:

His Majesty’s Government feel no disposition from any facts which have come within their knowledge to look with jealousy and distrust upon the conduct of the missionaries, and they have yet seen no plan by which the benefit of religion can be extended to the inhabitants of some parts of the globe without their aid and assistance.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Holland (Perceval) Papers, XXIV.16b: ‘Instances of the Loyalty of the Negroes in the West Indies, who belong to the Society late in connexion with the Rev^d John Wesley’, sent 28 Mar. 1808; *Documents on British West Indian History*, p. 225.

¹³⁷ Regent’s Park, Fuller Papers H4/4: William Smith to John Gutteridge, 24 and 26 Oct. 1811.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*: legal opinion of Vicary Gibbs and James Stephen, 20 Oct. 1807.

¹³⁹ *Documents on British West Indian History*, p. 98.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

We may consider this religious toleration as pragmatic, given the struggling state of the established Church; a principled adherence of religious toleration as accepted in Britain; and the consequence of planter over-reach.

As in India so Perceval wanted to strengthen the established Church in the Caribbean. The experienced Stephen believed that Perceval's proposed regulations – banning Sabbath working and requiring that slaves receive religious instruction – would fail because 'the best framed regulations would be a dead letter in the W.I.'. Stephen did agree with Perceval on the need 'to shew the wish to confer on these poor creatures the inestimable blessing of religious instruction'.¹⁴¹ We again have cause to lament the loss of Perceval's letters to Stephen though we can infer from Stephen's reply that Perceval wanted to ensure that the chaplains going to Berbice were (if possible) Anglicans. Stephen – contrastingly – reckoned that non-Anglicans would be needed.¹⁴² Additionally, efforts were made to gather information on the state of religion in the Caribbean, eventually published in 1815.¹⁴³ This presaged the development of episcopacy in the Caribbean. Henry Ryder commented to Dudley Ryder a month before Perceval's assassination that, alongside the need for one or two Indian bishops, a 'West Indian one would also be useful'.¹⁴⁴

As with church reform Perceval's endeavours were linked to efforts to bolster piety and education. Beilby Porteus, champion of curates and church-building, also distributed proposals 'for the Education & Religious instruction' of slave children, which met with approbation by Hugh Elliott on the Leeward Islands. Porteus also praised Lord Seaforth for improving the standard of Anglican clergy on the island.¹⁴⁵ Porteus' public letter to British

¹⁴¹ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 18-19: Stephen to Perceval, 30 Nov. 1807.

¹⁴² Ibid., fo. 165: idem, 24 Sep. 1810.

¹⁴³ JC, 65 (1811), pp. 460-1; *Papers relating to Population and Clerical Establishments in West Indies* 1814-5 (478).

¹⁴⁴ Harrowby MSS, Vol. V fo. 103: Henry to Dudley Ryder, 15. Apr. 1812.

¹⁴⁵ NLS, MS 13005, fo. 37: bishop of London to Hugh Elliot, 1 Mar. 1808.

settlers in the West Indies recommended establishing parochial schools across the British Caribbean, founded on Andrew Bell's system, to teach slaves to read (though not write), alongside bolstering Anglican clergy and respecting the Sabbath.¹⁴⁶ Porteus' lobbying and Perceval's support caused the Treasury to support the 'Society for the Conversion of Negro Slaves' in Antigua in securing land with a chapel upon it.¹⁴⁷ This anticipated the proliferation of Anglican Sunday Schools in the 1820s and 1830s,¹⁴⁸ and the 1824 establishment of bishoprics based in Barbados and Jamaica.¹⁴⁹ As in India, so in the Caribbean we can see the extension of Anglican provision that marked a shift from the eighteenth century approach whereby the Bishop of London was responsible for colonial churches.¹⁵⁰ These measures imitated domestic church reform in two ways. First, they resurrected policies suggested in Anne's reign: in 1714 she had approved the establishment of four colonial bishoprics, two each in North America and the Caribbean.¹⁵¹ Secondly, the same people were involved in both campaigns, notably Perceval and Porteus. Although the evidence is limited it does therefore appear that Perceval's Anglican impulses extended to the West and East Indies.

The third part of this section concentrates on slave trade suppression in Britain and Europe. In diplomatic negotiations with European states, and through domestic legislation we see that

¹⁴⁶ B. Porteus, *A Letter to the Governors, Legislators, and Proprietors of Plantations in the British West India Islands* (London, 1808).

¹⁴⁷ TNA, T29/95 fo. 304: Treasury Board minutes, 4 July 1808.

¹⁴⁸ O. Bloet 'Slavery and Freedom in the British West Indies, 1823-33: The Role of Education', *History of Education Quarterly*, 30 (1990), pp. 625-43; P. Rooke 'The Pedagogy of Conversion: Missionary Education to Slaves in the British West Indies, 1800-1833', *Paedagogica Historica*, 18 (1978), pp. 356-74; idem, 'Missionaries as Pedagogues: A Reconsideration of the Significance of Education for Slaves and Apprentices in the British West Indies, 1800-1838', *History of Education*, 9 (1980), pp. 65-79.

¹⁴⁹ M. Turner, 'The Bishop of Jamaica and Slave Instruction', *JEH*, 26 (1975), pp. 363-78.

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, 'Bishops and America', pp. 331-56; G. Yeo, 'A Case Without Parallel: The Bishops of London and the Anglican Church Overseas, 1660-1748', *JEH*, 44 (1993), pp. 450-75.

¹⁵¹ F. Greenwood, *A History of King's Chapel in Boston, the First Episcopal Church in New England* (Boston, 1833), pp. 76-82.

the government played a significant role in implementing abolition. The easiest way to eradicate the slave trade was for all European rulers to prohibit slave trading by their citizens. These war-time efforts have received limited coverage compared to the post-war diplomatic pressures to accomplish European abolition, including Paul Kielstra's account of diplomatic pressure, which begins in 1814. Similar works have had broad chronological foci, meaning that early efforts are quickly passed over.¹⁵² We shall examine the moderately successful negotiations with Portugal before considering the unsuccessful attempts to persuade Spain.

Canning acted swiftly in pursuit of international abolition, contacting the Portuguese within weeks of taking office. He did not have high hopes, opining that 'of course it [the slave trade] will not' be abandoned, fearing that Portugal would instead extend its slave trading.¹⁵³ Canning justified abolition to the Portuguese on humanitarian grounds: the slave trade produced 'misery to the country, from which the supply of Slaves is drawn' and the Trade was 'disgraceful to human nature'. He further argued that it heightened the insecurity of Portuguese Brazil; and that it was economically unnecessary, because sugar was barely profitable and cotton did not need slave labour, Canning urged Lord Strangford, Britain's ambassador in Brazil, that, short of abolition, Portuguese slave trading 'should be confined to the territories in Africa, which the Portuguese Traders have hitherto been accustomed to frequent'.¹⁵⁴

Portugal's rejection of complete abolition did not end efforts to curtail its slave trade. Canning instead instructed Strangford to focus on Bissao, a Portuguese settlement located in

¹⁵² P. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (Basingstoke, 2000); L. Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869* (London, 1970); D. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1980); H. Kern, 'Strategies of Legal Change: Great Britain, International Law, and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', *Journal of the History of International Law*, 6 (2004), pp. 233-58.

¹⁵³ BL, Add MS 89143/1/1/118: Canning to Perceval, 17 Apr. 1807.

¹⁵⁴ JC, 65 (1810), p. 630.

‘a Territory in which the Slave Trade is now nearly disused’. Strangford believed that the Portuguese Regent might be willing to cede Bissao to Britain,¹⁵⁵ and whilst Canning did not go so far, he told Wilberforce ‘I have broken ground about Bissao’, and wanted to know what the abolitionists would offer in exchange for abandonment of the Bissao slave trade.¹⁵⁶ These negotiations led to an agreement with Portugal in Rio de Janeiro in February 1810, the tenth article of which declared:

His Royal Highness the Prince Regent of Portugal engages that his Subjects shall not be permitted to carry on the Slave Trade on any part of the Coast of Africa, not actually belonging to His Royal Highness’s Dominions, in which that Trade has been discontinued and abandoned by the Powers and States of Europe, which formerly traded there, reserving however to his own Subjects the right of purchasing and trading in Slaves within the African Dominions of the Crown of Portugal.

The article also permitted Portugal to continue trading from Cabinda, Molembo and Ajuda, all Portuguese territories, thereby limiting its effectiveness. These efforts did not satisfy Stephen. In November 1807 he had wanted steps taken to prevent any neutrals carrying slaves to the Americas.¹⁵⁷ Stephen frankly stated that the separation of Spain and Portugal from their European colonies

would have been a happy event for British navigation & Trade & our Orders in Councils were calculated to insure to us the full advantage of it. It seems to me no

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 630.

¹⁵⁶ Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 349.

¹⁵⁷ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 12: Stephen to Perceval, 13 Nov. 1807.

less clear that the amity of the Portuguese & Spanish West Indies as Colonies of allied Powers in Europe will finish [in] the ruin of our own'.¹⁵⁸

In December 1810 Stephen and Wilberforce urged Perceval and Wellesley to get the tenth article amended. Wellesley agreed to push Portugal to relinquish any future claim to slave trading over areas where they did not currently trade.¹⁵⁹ The African Institution kept up the pressure, Canning being recruited to help sway Wellesley.¹⁶⁰ In early 1812 Wilberforce lobbied Castlereagh to secure Bissao from Portugal following the report of the African Commissioners that emphasised the importance of Portugal in perpetuating the slave trade.¹⁶¹ Although these endeavours demonstrate the unfinished nature of abolition, the war years did see partial suppression. James Gambier, consul-general at Rio de Janeiro, helped gather information on slave trading.¹⁶² There were complaints in Portugal and Spain about British seizure of their flagged ships carrying slaves. In the former case, Royal Navy captains misinterpreted the Anglo-Portuguese treaty as having banned all Portuguese slave trading in the northern hemisphere, a mistake uncorrected by the Admiralty until 1813.¹⁶³

Pittite attempts to secure international suppression of the slave trade included pushing Spain towards abolition. Their hopes were ultimately misplaced. In July 1808 Wilberforce urged Canning and Perceval, alongside Holland and Brougham, to pursue Spanish abolition. He looked to Spanish priests as possible champions of abolition.¹⁶⁴ Consequently Stephen

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., fo. 74: Stephen to Perceval, 27 Aug. 1808.

¹⁵⁹ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, pp. 486.

¹⁶⁰ BL, Add MS 37295, fo. 465: Canning to Wellesley, 13 Mar. 1811.

¹⁶¹ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iv, p. 19; *JC*, lxvii (1812), p. 830.

¹⁶² G. Atkins, 'Wilberforce and his Milieux: The Worlds of Anglican Evangelicalism, c.1780-1830', (Cambridge Univ. PhD thesis, 2009), p. 227.

¹⁶³ Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p. 11; Murray, *Odious Commerce*, p. 44; Kern, 'Strategies of Legal Change', pp. 234-8.

¹⁶⁴ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 372.

suggested to Perceval ceding Trinidad to help encourage Spanish abolitionism.¹⁶⁵ As a result Canning exhorted John Frere, Britain's ambassador in Spain, to press for abolition, with no success.¹⁶⁶ The issue reignited in 1810. Perceval, writing to Wellesley about a dispatch to Frere's successor Henry Wellesley, urged that:

As a point of feeling & character private & natural, as well as upon higher principles even of humanity justice, benevolence & religion, I should be anxious as I know you would also that we could procure the great object of the abolition of the Slave Trade by Spain. The point undoubtedly should be brought forward & urged, but to press it as a sine qua non, would be unreasonable, considering the state of mistaken prejudice upon that subject.¹⁶⁷

However, even a restriction equivalent to Portugal's was not forthcoming. This led to parliamentary criticism. In February 1808 Grenville criticised the government for pursuing a commercial agreement with Portuguese Brazil without agreement to abolish the slave trade. Liverpool pleaded that circumstances made negotiations inopportune, as he did responding to similar censure from Lord Holland about allying with Spain in February 1810.¹⁶⁸ Though no longer in office, Canning defended the government against charges of acting ineffectually to secure abolition. In June 1810 he warned that making abolition a condition of a Spanish alliance risked driving 'Spanish colonies into the arms of France'.¹⁶⁹ He acknowledged that foreign connivance in evading the Anglo-American prohibitions, notably by flying under

¹⁶⁵ Wilberforces, *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, ii, p. 135; BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 60-7, Stephen to Perceval, 13 July 1808.

¹⁶⁶ *Papers relating to the Abolition of the Portuguese Slave Trade 1806-10* (1810), p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ BL, Add MS 37295, fo. 278: Perceval to Wellesley, 29 Apr. 1810.

¹⁶⁸ *PD*, 1808, x, 734-5; 1810, xv, 374-6.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1810, xviii, 734.

Swedish flags, had not been discussed.¹⁷⁰ During the same debate Perceval had struck a cautionary note, observing ‘that the difficulties which lay in the way of such an attempt [at Iberian abolition] were greater than the hon. gent. [Brougham] allowed’, though citing the Portuguese agreement as ‘some progress’.¹⁷¹ Parliamentary pressure concentrated both on suppressing the false flags that facilitated smuggling into British colonies, and the foreign slave trade. Revealingly the latter was vocally condemned by Joseph Marryat, a spokesman for West Indian planters, who suggested treating slave traders as pirates. This represented self-interest from a group whose speeches implicitly criticised abolition and who evidently feared that other plantations were benefiting at their expense.¹⁷² These parliamentary debates foreshadowed debates in the Spanish Cortes over abolition in 1811. Henry Wellesley was not ordered to apply direct pressure to the government or Cortes, though he was instructed to apply his ‘utmost endeavours to inculcate the wisdom and justice’ of abolition. When resolutions came before the Cortes in spring 1811 the issue was sent to a commission and buried. Concurrently the War Office did draw up proposals for how Spain should restrict her slave trade to avoid its abuse by felonious Britons. The dispatch to Henry Wellesley forthrightly threatened to condemn suspicious vessels unless the ships, sailors, cargo and capital could be proven to be Spanish-owned.¹⁷³ Although tepid in urging Spanish abolition, the British government was uncompromising about enforcing its own laws.

This recovery of the Pittite efforts to foster international abolitionism raises two interconnected questions: did the British Government miss a golden opportunity to drive forward international abolition during the war, and could Portugal and Spain have been pressured into abolition? Stephen sagely recognised that a friendly Portugal would hinder

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., xvi, 13*****. (Asterisks found in the original. The reason for their inclusion is unclear, though it may have been a late addition to the printed text).

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 675.

¹⁷² Ibid., xviii, 676-7, 687-8; xix, 239.

¹⁷³ Murray, *Odious Commerce*, pp. 29-34, 43.

abolition more than had she been hostile.¹⁷⁴ During hostilities Britain could have suffocated the Iberian slave trades; whereas there were limits to coercing allies whose independence Britain was fighting to uphold. Vested interests in the Iberia and in South America would not countenance Portuguese and Spanish abolition. Contrastingly the French slave trade was suffocated, through the blockade of French ports and through the capture of French colonies. Swedes had reportedly increased their slave trading post-1807,¹⁷⁵ operating under American flags,¹⁷⁶ and Stephen had feared they might turn St Bartholomew Island into an ‘entrêpot’ for the trade.¹⁷⁷ When Napoleon forced Sweden to declare war, Britain, desirous of retaining a *de facto* friend in the Baltic, abstained from capturing her West Indian possessions.¹⁷⁸ Once the mask of war was replaced by a sincere alliance in 1813 Sweden abolished the trade.¹⁷⁹ Deteriorating relations with America precluded co-operation on enforcing their prohibitions. Canning alleged that the American government was unfriendly to abolition. Brougham disputed this, and indeed argued that American opinion would tolerate the seizure of slave trading American ships, citing the *Amedie* case.¹⁸⁰ We shall turn to Anglo-American disputes presently. But we can conclude that much groundwork was laid for post-war efforts at international abolition.

Investigating foreign slave trading exposed the problem of illegal British slave trading. Britons continued to be involved, fitting out foreign vessels used in slave trading, illegally slave trading under false flags from West Africa, and importing slaves from Spanish America. Henry Brougham took up the cause of tackling this problem, beginning, in 1810, by securing Parliamentary motions, one for correspondence with foreign powers over abolition,

¹⁷⁴ BL, Add MS 58998, fo. 150: Stephen to Grenville, 7 Jan. 1808.

¹⁷⁵ *Fourth Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London, 1810), p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 127: Stephen to Perceval, 9 Aug. 1809.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. fo. 8: Stephen to Perceval, 7 Nov. 1807.

¹⁷⁸ Duke University, Rubenstein Library, Spencer Perceval Papers: Perceval to Croker, nd.

¹⁷⁹ *Seventh Report of the African Institution*, p. 84.

¹⁸⁰ *PD*, 1810, xvi, 13*****; xviii, 1810, 664-7.

another condemning the ‘clandestine and fraudulent manner’ by which the trade persisted. Brougham called for their detection and suppression,¹⁸¹ and highlighted the case of the *Commercio de Rio*, which had been detected thanks to the actions of Zachary Macaulay in September 1809.¹⁸² In 1810 Brougham introduced legislation that altered the definition of slave trading from a misdemeanour to a felony. Perceval joined the universal chorus of support, only noting that the offence would not be a capital felony.¹⁸³ Brougham’s bill, which punished slave trading with transportation or imprisonment, enjoyed a speedy passage through Parliament. The days of the heated debate over the slave trade were over, with erstwhile opponent Joseph Marryat supporting the legislation.¹⁸⁴ Although Brougham’s bill testified to the persistence of illegal slave trading, it also reaffirmed Parliament’s resolve to enforce abolition.

This section has illuminated how Perceval was involved in various parts of the abolitionist campaign. He supported it in parliament and abetted its accomplishment behind the scenes. He championed efforts to suppress illegal trading post-1807 in West Africa and in the Caribbean. The Pittites, despite their earlier disagreements, united on enforcing the law, and we have seen how this distinguished them from British planters in the Caribbean. Perceval and Canning were also the foremost drivers of international abolitionism during the war years, and their experiences anticipated the future challenges faced in convincing other nations to outlaw slave trading. Unlike other abolitionist Pittites such as Canning, Perceval was motivated by providential concerns, and his proselytising zeal conjoined with his establishmentarian impulses in seeking to improve clerical provision in the West Indies.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 12*****; xvii, 674-5.

¹⁸² Holland (Perceval) Papers, D.12: Macaulay to Perceval, 30 Sep. 1809.

¹⁸³ *PD*, 1811, xix, 239.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 239; for the bill’s progress see *JC*, 66 (1811), pp. 148, 152, 155, 226, 285-6, 290, 317, 320, 326.

Orders in Council

The last section considers how much abolitionist impulses drove the controversial Orders in Council policy of 1807-12. Introduced in November 1807, the Orders continued until just after Perceval's assassination, being one major policy change directly attributable to his death. Their repeal marked a final desperate attempt to avoid war with America, following a vigorous campaign of provincial merchants and manufactures who blamed the Orders for their economic hardship. Ann Burton has recently argued that the Orders in Council policy was James Stephen's subtle plan to destroy the slave trade by strangling neutral trade,¹⁸⁵ thereby implying that war with America resulted from an objective – slave-trade suppression – for which both nations had legislated.¹⁸⁶ Jeremy Black's recent history of the war of 1812 has briefly repeated this claim.¹⁸⁷ This adds another cause for this conflict to those copiously discussed for the last two centuries. American and Canadian views have invariably dominated these debates, mostly concentrating on American motives for declaring war. These have ranged from ambitions to expand westwards, to conquer Canada, to prevent Royal Navy impressment of American sailors, to assert American nationalism, to gain advantage in American domestic politics, and to obstruct the British Orders in Council.¹⁸⁸ Burton suggests that Stephen's pursuit of suppressing the slave trade through curtailing neutral flags was an important factor in the government's Orders in Council policy. Beginning with Stephen's

¹⁸⁵ A. Burton, 'British Evangelicals, Economic Warfare and the Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1794-1810', in J. Black (ed.), *The Atlantic Slave Trade Volume IV: Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 117-45.

¹⁸⁶ A. Linklater, *Why Spencer Perceval Had To Die: The Assassination of a British Prime Minister* (London, 2012), pp. 163-78.

¹⁸⁷ J. Black, *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon* (London, 2009), pp. 27-8.

¹⁸⁸ B. Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States 1805-1812* (Los Angeles, 1968); J. Trautsch, 'The Causes of the War of 1812: 200 Years of Debate', *The Journal of Military History*, 77 (2013), pp. 273-93; idem, "'Mr Madison's War' or the Dynamic of Early American Nationalism', *Early American Studies*, 10 (2012), pp. 630-70; J. Stagg, 'James Madison and the 'Malcontents': The Political Origins of the War of 1812', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 33 (1976), pp. 557-85; N. Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia, 2012).

War in Disguise, published in 1805 and advocating action against the fraudulent use of neutral flags, the policy reached its apogee with the *Amedie* ruling. This section evaluates this interpretation, asking whether it can be applied to the Pittites in general. First, it summarises the background and development of Orders in Council. It then argues that there is limited direct evidence that slave trade suppression was the explicit intention of the Pittites. But Stephen did exercise influence on Perceval, and crucially Stephen shared several key assumptions with the Pittites.

Disputes with neutrals were nothing new, demonstrated by the Baltic States' Leagues of Armed Neutrality of 1780-3 and 1800-1. The British position was shaped by the Rule of 1756 that prohibited neutrals from carrying enemy colonial trade in war-time when that commerce was closed to neutrals in peace-time, an interpretation disputed by the foremost non-combatant, America. The idea that France and Spain were evading capture by using neutral flags, alongside employing American shipping, to perpetuate their colonial trade was detailed by James Stephen in 1805. On a legal level the High Court of the Admiralty in 1805 began to offer stricter interpretations. In the *Essex* case an American vessel that had, conforming to earlier Admiralty judgements, stopped and unloaded her cargoes in an American port whilst travelling from the French West Indies to France, was nevertheless condemned. In May 1806 Fox introduced a strict blockade from Ostend to Le Havre with two lesser blockades extending to the Elbe and Brest respectively. In the latter regions neutrals could land if their goods were not war contraband or owned by the enemy, had not been loaded at an enemy port, and were originally intended for that port.¹⁸⁹ More significantly, on 21 November 1806 Napoleon issued the Berlin Decree banning all neutral trade with Britain and confiscating all British goods on the Continent. The Talents responded in January 1807

¹⁸⁹ E. Heckscher, *The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation* (Oxford, 1922), pp. 107-8.

by prohibiting ‘trade from one port to another, both which ports shall belong to or be in the possession of France or her allies’. Practically speaking this assailed the French coastal trade. Another Order, of 18 February 1807, confirmed that trade could continue with Hamburg, Bremen and other north German ports. These measures were inadequate for the Pittites. Perceval argued that restricting coastal trade was meaningless, as enemy commerce would persist internally. Instead:

He thought that the best plan would have been to prevent the importation of the commodities of the colonies of France and Spain into France, and the countries under her dominion. Suppose that we could not succeed in doing this completely, yet we should increase the cost, and render the conveyance more perilous. We should enhance the price of these articles, and enable our own commodities to meet them with advantage. We should improve the market, therefore, for our own merchants and manufacturers, and promote the sale of their goods. We should then have that trade which could be most easily interrupted, and which our enemy could not extricate from our grasp, and he would literally be made to feel the evil effects of his own injustice ... You might turn the provisions of the French decree against themselves, and as they have said that no British goods should sail freely on the seas, you might say that no goods should be carried to France, except they first touched at a British port. They might be forced to be entered at the custom-house, and a certain entry imposed, which would contribute to enhance the price, and give a better sale in the foreign market to your own commodities.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ *PD*, 1807, viii, 630-2.

The Talents policies also included turning the island of Tortola into a free port, and seemingly making concessions to the Americans. This also perturbed the Pittites. Perceval wrote that:

I am tremblingly anxious for the Event of our American negotiation – what the Principles of Gov^t are I know not, but they have given such symptoms of laxity in their opinions upon all subjects connected with Colonial & Navigation policy that, I have more fears than hopes – the authors of the Tortola Free Port Bill – the authors of the American intercourse Bill are the negotiators between this Country & America.¹⁹¹

Perceval's opposition to the American Intercourse Bill was shared by Castlereagh, Canning, and Rose. Perceval alleged that the measure misguidedly asserted that British Caribbean islands depended on America to survive, and that 'To legislate upon this principle, what is it but to tell them and the world that America may do what she pleases with us.'¹⁹² Ironically the Americans rejected the ensuing Monroe-Pinkney treaty.¹⁹³ Tougher action against France and America was to become characteristic of the Portland and Perceval governments.

Responding to Napoleon's renewed crackdown, the new Portland ministry on 19 August 1807 restricted the trade of German ports; and then in November and December passed a series of Orders in Council. These declared all French and French-allied ports under blockade, including their colonies, refused to recognise the sale of enemy-owned ships to neutrals, and declared that neutral ships accepting enemy 'certificates of origin' would be judged prizes. Neutrals could continue trading from their own country to the enemy colonies,

¹⁹¹ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 15: draft speech of March 1807.

¹⁹² *PD*, 1806, vii, 686-95, 697-728, 972-86, 1009.

¹⁹³ Perkins, *Prologue to War*, p. 188.

and to trade with Europe through Britain (excepting sugar, coffee, wine, brandy, snuff and cotton) upon paying a duty and securing a licence. Subsequent Orders reiterated the prohibition on enemy colonial produce directly entering Britain.

In response Napoleon tightened his restrictions through the Milan Decrees. These British and French actions triggered the American Embargo Act of December 1807, which prohibited American trade with combatants. It was quickly undermined by smuggling. In March 1808 Perceval was initially inclined towards conciliatory measures towards America, but was dissuaded by Canning, Castlereagh and Mulgrave.¹⁹⁴ Instead new Orders were passed in April 1808. The importation of lumber and provisions in neutral ships to British colonies was permitted; but exporting cotton-wool and Jesuit's Bark (quinine) to France was controversially forbidden. In February 1809 the American Congress abandoned the ineffective embargo. Consequently, in April 1809, following Bathurst's and Canning's lobbying, a new Order in Council renewed the restrictions for Italy, France and the Low Countries, up to the river Ems, and the enemy colonies, thereby softening the impact on German states under the Napoleonic yoke. The new Order closed American access to French colonies whilst reopening northern Europe, alongside reducing transit duties and issuing licences to trade with Europe.

The first problem in establishing a connection between the November 1807 Orders in Council and abolitionism is the lack of articulation of this as a major motive. Only one Cabinet minister explicitly mentioned the slave trade in autumn 1807, responding to Perceval's proposals for tougher regulations following Napoleon's Berlin Decree. Lord Eldon, an erstwhile anti-abolitionist, opined: 'My Opinion of the Impolicy of what we have

¹⁹⁴ BL, Add MS 49177: fo. 137-45, Perceval's memorandum on revising Orders in Council, 26 Mar 1808; fo. 146-8: Bathurst to Perceval, 26 Mar. 1808; fo. 148-9: Draft Order in Council; fo. 150-3: Canning to Perceval, 28 Mar. 1808; fo. 154-6: Castlereagh's thoughts on the draft Order; fo. 156-7: Mulgrave to Perceval, 3 Apr. 1808.

done as to the Slave Trade makes me wish to prohibit to other Nations but I doubt how we can do it on the principle of this Order?’¹⁹⁵ Eldon’s question went unanswered. Suppressing the slave trade was otherwise unmentioned in cabinet or parliamentary justifications of the Orders in Council.

Stephen was not directly involved in cabinet discussions in autumn 1807. However, he did correspond with Perceval during this period. This is one clue that abolitionism was an underlying concern among some of the shapers of Orders in Council. Their reticence echoed Stephen’s opaque references in *War in Disguise* to slave trading. Stephen did allude critically to slave trading into Cuba under American flags, and to increases in slave population in Guadeloupe.¹⁹⁶ In 1806 Stephen suggested negotiating with America and Denmark to relax the Rule of 1756 in return for ‘allowing us to intercept and condemn vessels under their colours, employed in supplying the French and Spanish colonies with slaves’.¹⁹⁷ In 1807 Wilberforce commented that ‘[Stephen] agrees with Perceval passim, and with the government as to their grand scheme of policy – Orders in Council; indeed it is his measure’.¹⁹⁸ To consider Stephen’s influence let us first examine his pamphlet, then his correspondence with Perceval.

Stephen’s pamphlet *War in Disguise* assumed, as Pittites did, that the colonial trade would be monopolised by the colonial power. Stephen claimed that ‘colonial trade’ was not commerce, but the equivalent to ‘a man sending his own wine, from his cellar in London to his house in the country’. Stephen wanted proper enforcement of the Rule of 1756 and worried that the status quo permitted European, notably German, manufactures to supplant British manufactures. He argued that inaction would bring ruin because France could pursue

¹⁹⁵ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 96-7: Lord Eldon’s opinion on proposed Orders in Council.

¹⁹⁶ J. Stephen, *War in Disguise; or, The Frauds of Neutral Flags* (London, 1805), pp. 73, 139, 204.

¹⁹⁷ J. Stephen, *Observations on the Speech of the Hon. John Randolph* (London, 1806), p. 32.

¹⁹⁸ Wilberforces, *Life of Wilberforce*, iii, p. 358.

‘active maritime enterprizes [*sic*]’; their colonies and commerce would benefit through lower freight, insurance and war duties; and British sailors ‘are debauched into foreign employ, to carry on the trade of our enemies’. The status quo harmed internal American commerce, and Stephen dismissed the possibility of an American war. One passage does appear to foreshadow the Order in Council in November 1807:

Should it be found necessary in the case supposed [war with a neutral], to license any commerce of this kind, whether in British, or foreign bottoms, we might, as far as respects the trade of the hostile colonies, have the benefit without the disadvantage of the present traffic. Not a hogshead of sugar, in the case supposed, ought to be protected from the hostile West Indies, except in its way to the British market; there to be taxed in such a degree as would preclude the present superiority of the enemy in a competition with our own planters. Neither ought a single article to be carried by licence to those colonies that can serve to extend their existing scale of cultivation.

Stephen suggested moderately enforcing the Rule of 1756, thereby ensuring an export market for American farmers.¹⁹⁹ The proposals to use licences, to cajole neutral trade to Europe through Britain and subject it to duties, and to preserve direct American trade with enemy colonies, all foreshadowed subsequent British policy. The pamphlet made Stephen’s name, being introduced by Perceval to George III ‘as the author of the pamphlet called *War in Disguise*’.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Stephen, *War in Disguise*, pp. 13-16, 71, 156, 167, 193, 196-7, 199-201, 204, 208-10.

²⁰⁰ *LCGIII*, v, p. 37.

Let us now turn to Stephen's contribution to the discussions of Orders in Council in autumn 1807. Initially Stephen wrote to Perceval, animated with providential fervour. The prospect of war with conquered Portugal, which briefly flickered in November 1807, coupled with the Continental System, saw Stephen 'exhilarated at finding Buonaparte thus driving us into the very system which alone can baffle the further aims of his own ambition'. The situation presented the opportunity for 'the total liberation of Africa from the slave trade, & to give us an incalculable commercial reward for having renounced that traffic'. Stephen exclaimed:

Wise righteous & wonderful Providence, if it be indeed such, to make this grand foe of the African race the instrument of their compleat [*sic*] deliverance and that in conjunction with the very event he most abhors, the triumph of British commerce & British power over confederated Europe.

Who durst have hoped that when we abolished the Slave trade last spring we should be so soon in a situation to compel all other Powers to renounce it too? & that merely by the use of a maritime system which our own interest & self preservation prescribe to us, which every party in the Country is prepared to acquiesce in, if not loudly applaud, & which even the British West Indies will be the first to rejoice in & commend!²⁰¹

This exultation was curtailed by Portugal's subsequent alignment with Britain. Nevertheless Stephen advised on details of the measure, notably on neutral trade with enemy colonies.²⁰² He differed from other supporters, such as Castlereagh, who wanted to spare 'the Victim

²⁰¹ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 11-15: Stephen to Perceval, 13 Nov. 1807.

²⁰² Ibid., fo. 7: idem, c.7 Nov. 1807.

States' the restrictions imposed on France, Spain, the Low Countries, Italy and Westphalia.²⁰³ Stephen objected to distinguishing Prussia, Lübeck, and Portugal as 'blockading countries not hostile which have been forced into the system of France'. He argued that they had greater rights of trade than neutrals did – Portuguese vessels could trade between New York and Charlestown, whereas American ships could not carry Portuguese internal or colonial trade. Stephen wanted the blockade extended to those countries' colonies. This would 'give to British Manufactures a speedy monopoly of every market in the New World'.²⁰⁴ Another piece of evidence suggesting that abolitionism was an influence, for Perceval as well as Stephen, comes from a letter to Wilberforce. Perceval refers to a Mr Frazer, who 'will not be satisfied with our late Orders in Council as they do not go far enough to meet his wishes – but upon the whole he will find that a good deal of his system will be adopted by his Maj's present Governmt [*sic*]'.²⁰⁵

However, Stephen's contribution needs to be placed alongside the cabinet discussions on Orders in Council in autumn 1807. The chief explanation proffered consistently by Perceval and other Pittites for Orders in Council was that they were necessary and justified as retaliation for Napoleon's Berlin Decree. Let us therefore put Eldon's remark in the context of these Cabinet discussions to understand the motives for the Orders of November 1807. On 12 October 1807 Perceval circulated a memorandum. Having described Napoleon's prohibition both of neutral trade with Britain and of British commerce, he declared that 'The Question is in what Degree is it just, and if just in what degree it is politic for Great Britain to retaliate'. Dissatisfaction with the Talents' measures combined with Napoleon's recently enhanced enforcement of his ban. The Cabinet discussion followed the two points which

²⁰³ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 57-9: Castlereagh to Portland, 26 Oct. 1807.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., fo. 26-8: idem, 5 Dec. 1807.

²⁰⁵ Duke University, Rubenstein Library, Wilberforce Papers: Perceval to Wilberforce, [c. autumn 1807].

Perceval had laid down. They broadly followed Perceval in rigorously supporting a ‘right of retaliation’. Perceval argued that Napoleon had effectively disowned the ‘law of nations’. If retaliation impacted on neutrals, the principle applied was ‘recognised by the Law of Nations, and the Savages of nations in all wars. Where a neutral nation is forced to submit to let one Belligerent pass thro’ her neutral territories, she can on no principle refuse to the other Belligerent a similar passage’.²⁰⁶ In the Parliamentary debates of early 1808 Perceval planned to say that France’s action, by ‘violating the Conventional Law of Nations ... Gives us a right to retaliate in a similar manner, notwithstanding similar consequences [injury to neutrals]. That our Right to retaliate is immediate – That we have a right to expect that the neutral should resent it and nothing short of an express revocation can disarm us of that right’.²⁰⁷ Perceval’s tough line was supported by Hawkesbury and Castlereagh.²⁰⁸ Canning was more cautious, claiming in October 1807 that ‘I have never for a moment doubted the justice of retaliation to the full extent: & the right of retaliating to the full extent unquestionably includes the right of partial retaliation’.²⁰⁹ He agreed with turning American ships away from enemy ports under blockade. But he did not extend this idea to neutrals as readily as more hawkish colleagues, arguing that ‘It is not true in principle that where-ever there is a right to enforce a greater burden, there is a fortiori a right to commute it for a smaller, without the consent of the party [America] that is to bear it.’²¹⁰ Bathurst was chary about ideas of retaliations, commenting that ‘Retaliation seems to admit something of a vindictive spirit’,²¹¹ and Westmorland feared publicly censuring French actions that ‘we are going to imitate’.²¹²

²⁰⁶ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 28: Perceval’s Orders in Council paper for the cabinet, 12 Oct. 1807.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., fo. 123: notes for speech on 5 Feb. 1808.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., fo. 41-4, 47-8: Hawkesbury and Castlereagh’s opinions on Perceval’s paper.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., fo. 49-50: Canning’s opinion on Perceval’s paper, 14 Oct. 1807.

²¹⁰ Ibid. Add MS 89143/1/12/1: Canning to Perceval, 9 Nov. 1807.

²¹¹ Ibid. Add MS 49177, fo. 81: Bathurst’s comments on draft Order in Council.

²¹² Ibid., fo. 92: Westmorland’s opinions on Orders in Council, nd [1807].

The hawks' argument was that Britain had a right to retaliate against France either exactly as she had, or to a lesser extent. Neutrals had connived in Napoleon's restrictions by continuing to trade without protest. Perceval declared in February 1808 that Orders in Council 'were not resorted to for the purpose of running a race of privations with the enemy, but to make him abandon the measures he had adopted, and to cause him to feel what must otherwise have been alone felt by this country'.²¹³ Naturally American and parliamentary opponents of the Orders disputed this claim.²¹⁴

The government persisted in 1808-12 in arguing that the measure was retaliatory.²¹⁵ This partly constituted a legal justification, which slowly ceased to be challenged in Parliament. Perceval expressed pleasure in 1812 that the Orders were no longer denounced as 'unjust'.²¹⁶ Simultaneously it underpinned the government's argument against repeal. This became significant when the Cadore letter, which promised repeal of Napoleon's prohibitive decrees against America if Britain abandoned Orders in Council, persuaded or duped President Madison into asserting that the French decrees against America had been terminated. Perceval disagreed, writing in early 1812 that first, the decrees persisted because American ships visited by British officials were deemed denationalised and liable to seizure by Napoleon, and second, that Napoleon had seized neutral states to enforce his Continental System. Thirdly, Perceval claimed that the Cadore letter only meant repeal for America, whilst Napoleon continued to exclude Britain.²¹⁷ Privately Perceval also noted that France made repeal of her decrees conditional on Britain repealing her Orders in Council and

²¹³ *PD*, 1808, x, 720.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 317-8.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1812, xxi, 1153.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1151.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62-3, 780-1, 1159.

conforming to Napoleon's definition of a blockade as somewhere 'invested *by land* as well as *by sea* – which scarcely any place that G.B. ever can blockade is likely to be'.²¹⁸

Assuming that retaliation was lawful, how far should it extend? A paper, found amongst Perceval's papers, discussed the different policy responses. The first option, simply interdicting 'all commerce with France and her allies', was seen as simple, practicable and justifiable in principle, 'but in its operation it w^d be little short of war upon neutrals by having scarce any commerce remaining on them'. The second option was prohibiting the conveyance of French and French-allied goods to hostile ports, whilst permitting neutrals to continue trading, effectively ensuring that British exports also entered Europe. However, two problems were identified. It would be open to evasions, through relying on certificates of origin like those stipulated by France. Moreover it 'would probably produce war as it w^d more immediately operate upon the most clamorous and hostile part of the United States'. One mitigation, favoured by Castlereagh,²¹⁹ was restricting the policy to France and Holland, and not those 'Victim States' of northern Germany, through which British imports could surreptitiously travel.²²⁰ The third option was that 'Vessels with hostile Products might be allowed to enter hostile Ports only upon condition of first coming to this Country and taking a certain Proportion of their Cargoes of British Manufacturers and Colonial Produce'. The policy ultimately adopted was similar, requiring would-be importers to pay a duty before proceeding to Europe. Having agreed that full retaliation was impractical, pragmatic considerations dominated the cabinet's epistolary exchanges about the best response. What retaliation meant in practice was explained by Perceval to Charles Abbot on 1 December 1807:

²¹⁸ E. Herries, *Memoir of the public Life of the Right Hon. John Charles Herries in the reigns of George III, George IV, William IV, and Victoria* (2 vols., London, 1884), i, pp. 15-16.

²¹⁹ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 57-9: Castlereagh to Portland, 26 Oct. 1807.

²²⁰ Ibid., fo. 23-4: paper on options for retaliating against France, 5 Oct. 1807.

they say to the enemy, if you will not have *our* trade, as far as we can help it you shall have *none*. And as to so much of any trade as you can carry on yourselves, or others carry on with you through us, if you admit it, you shall pay for it. The only trade cheap and untaxed which you shall have, shall be either direct from us, in our own produce and manufactures, or from our allies, whose increased prosperity will be an advantage to us.²²¹

Having examined the initial formation of the Orders, let us now ask whether abolitionism subsequently continued to underpin support for Orders in Council? Stephen continued to play a role in defending them. He corresponded with Perceval about the Orders; he spoke in favour of them; and his assumptions were often shared by ministers. On 13 November 1807 Stephen wrote: ‘On the wider view of our maritime system at large I need say nothing you know my opinion; & I believe they are your own’.²²² We find Stephen offering to write a pamphlet on the subject in spring 1808,²²³ discussing possible strategies during an American war, and commenting on how far Spain and Portugal should have to follow the Orders in Council as co-belligerents.²²⁴ Stephen wrote a memorandum about responding to American offers to lift the embargo in return for repeal of the British Orders. He examined how much the requirements of justice necessitated a British repeal (he felt there was none); the needs of policy, which turned on the true nature of the American offer; and questions of national honour which he thought remained spotless if Britain acted. Stephen was generally bullish in believing concessions to America unwise, unless they were essential

²²¹ *Colchester*, ii, p. 135.

²²² BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 12-13: Stephen to Perceval, 13 Nov. 1807.

²²³ *Ibid.*, fo. 51-3: Stephen to Perceval, Feb/Mar. 1808.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, fo. 70-5: *idem*, 27 Aug. 1808; fo. 78- 98: Stephen’s memorandum, 28 Aug. 1808.

to prevent war. Conflict brought uncertainty, the potential complication of South American independence, the cost of convoys to South America, and possible public opposition at home, and therefore Stephen favoured ‘conciliation or the chance of it, rather than war’.²²⁵ As a lawyer Stephen was involved at the ‘Cockpit’, the Admiralty prize court, though curiously he wrote to Eldon that ‘The present exercises of our maritime rights (of which I am not guiltless) has long thrown the whole ground almost of original jurisdiction in the Vice Admiralty Courts into Fallow’.²²⁶ In Parliament Stephen consistently defended the Orders. In 1808 and 1812 he questioned witnesses in the Commons. He charged America, in June 1809, with having ‘no wish to promote an impartial course with respect to France and this country’. In 1812 he openly supported using fraudulent papers to smuggle British goods into Napoleonic Europe.²²⁷ On the point where stopping neutral shipping intersected with preventing slave trading, both Brougham and Stephen believed that seizing American vessels engaged in slave trading would not bring reprisals.²²⁸ Stephen commented: ‘I should not scruple to tell a “Captain going to Africa” you need little fear any ill consequences to yourself from seizing these smugglers when found under American colours, though their neutral character should ever so clearly appear’.²²⁹ Beginning with the *Amedie* ruling, the Admiralty court followed the principle that unless the slave trade was lawful in the vessel’s nation their activity was deemed a violation of the laws of nations. Combined with stopping neutral and enemy ships this did enable the diminution of the slave trade. Therefore, Stephen continued to be influential through his direct connection with Perceval.

²²⁵ Ibid., fo. 103-11: ‘Remarks on the “Considerations” &c respecting the present state of our controversy with America, 26 Oct. 1808.

²²⁶ Ibid., fo. 192: Stephen to Eldon, 2 Oct. 1810.

²²⁷ *PD*, 1808, x, 1315; 1809, xiv, 1028; 1812, xxi, 1137, xxii, 1110-11.

²²⁸ Ibid. 1810, xviii, 664-7.

²²⁹ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 128: Stephen to Perceval, 9 Aug. 1809.

Stephen also shared several significant assumptions with members of Perceval's cabinet. Bathurst and Perceval followed Stephen in wanting to suppress neutral-carried French colonial trade. Bathurst observed that 'the object of the Proposed Order, tho general, is in fact nothing but the Colonial Trade carried on through America'.²³⁰ Perceval claimed that prior to the Orders 'France enjoyed, by the assistance of neutrals, as great advantages of trade as we possessed with our triumphant navy'.²³¹ Whilst Britain could trade with Europe through neutrals this benefit might have outweighed the cost of France using neutrals, but Britain's exclusion from Europe altered the case.²³² Stephen and Perceval wanted to direct commerce through Britain. Two days after the initial Orders had been promulgated Stephen exhorted: 'You must plant in England one foot of that bridge over which you may compel all the commerce of the earth to pass & pay tolls'.²³³ Perceval soon replicated this language: 'The world shall not trade with France, except so far as England likes'.²³⁴ This view was continually repeated until 1812. Bathurst stated that 'France by her decrees had resolved to abolish all trade with England. England said in return, that France should then have no trade but with England'. Perceval echoed this language: 'France had declared that Great Britain should not have any trade with any nation upon earth; the British government, in return, said that, "You (France) shall have no trade but with us"'.²³⁵ Similarly Perceval and Stephen agreed that smuggling into Europe could undermine the Continental System. Stephen thought that 'it is an essential part of the new system to lift our manufactures over the enemy's blockading wall by the aid of his own subjects'.²³⁶ Perceval likewise justified re-exporting

²³⁰ Ibid. Add MS 49177, fo. 100: Bathurst's revised views on Orders in Council, before 11 Nov. 1807.

²³¹ *PD*, 1808, x, 328.

²³² BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 128: notes for speech on 5 Feb. 1808.

²³³ Ibid., Add MS 49183, fo. 13: Stephen to Perceval, 13 Nov. 1807.

²³⁴ Ibid., Add MS 49177, fo. 125-6: notes for speech on 5 Feb. 1808.

²³⁵ *PD*, 1812, xxi, 1053, 1153.

²³⁶ BL, Add MS 49183, fo. 25: Stephen to Perceval, 5 Dec. 1807.

neutral goods from Britain because ‘the legal permitted trade will always to a certain degree afford a mask & cover for that which is prohibited’.²³⁷ This proved prescient. Napoleon’s blockade turned Hamburg into a major smuggling centre. Illicit trade persisted through Sweden, Heligoland, Malta, Gibraltar, the Iberian Peninsula, and Lissa. The number of ships clearing Gothenburg trebled from 1808 to 1812 and Malta’s fleet quadrupled between 1803 and 1811.²³⁸ Smuggling also ensured continued access to the Russian market, through Finland, which supplemented official attempts to re-open Russian markets.²³⁹ The British government also energetically pursued commercial markets elsewhere, notably in South America. Hence on commercial subjects Stephen and Perceval were in accord.

Another important mutually-held assumption concerned America, that America would not fight and that if she did Britain would easily triumph. In 1805 Stephen argued that American trade would be destroyed by war, necessitating the taxing of landholders with no interest in the conflict. This would deter America: ‘Those, in short, who suppose that America would be easily now brought to engage in a war with any great maritime power of Europe, know little of the commerce, and less of the interior state of that country’.²⁴⁰ Stephen also had astute ideas about how to fight such a conflict. These he articulated in a thirty-two-side memorandum, ‘Coup d’oeil on an American War’. Stephen started by stressing the need ‘to convince the people of America that their honour is in no degree committed in the present disputes; but that it is for the mercantile profits of neutrality alone that they are called on ...

²³⁷ Ibid., Add MS 49177, fo. 25: Perceval’s Orders in Council paper for the cabinet, 12 Oct. 1807.

²³⁸ K. Aslestad and J. Joor (eds.), *Revisiting Napoleon’s Continental System: Local, Regional and European Experiences* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 6, 92.

²³⁹ D. Macmillan, ‘Russo-British Trade Relations under Alexander I’, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 9 (1975), pp. 437-48; CUL, Add MS 8713/XVII fo. 5: Rose to Perceval, 2 Oct. 1807; BL, Add MS 49186, fo. 95: Wilberforce to Perceval, [21 Apr. 1812], fo. 97: John Gisborne to Perceval, 21 Apr. 1812; Holland (Perceval) Papers I.23: Perceval to Wellesley [Jul. 1810].

²⁴⁰ Stephen, *War in Disguise*, p. 208-9.

[to] submit to the burthens of war'. Stephen contended that 'the popular voice ... in America it is everything'. It therefore mattered that America should initiate hostilities, and to avoid aggravating American opinions through unnecessary ship seizures. During the conflict the 'Offensive war against the U. States of America should unquestionably be confined to the Ocean'. Her trade should be destroyed; and frigates and sloops used to seize her privateers. But apart from at naval dockyards 'a gun ought not be fired on any part of the American Territory', thereby preventing American indignation against Britain. War would destroy American commercial revenue and require heavy internal taxation, meaning that 'The sword with which we shall subdue the French Party in America is popular discontent at the effects of a maritime war'. Stephen pithily summed up his strategy: 'we shall force a feeble Government into extreme taxation, & democracy will soon do the rest'.²⁴¹

Stephen's confident assumption that America would never risk war because it would lose was widely shared. John Quincy Adams told his mother in March 1812 that Britain had 'formed a settled opinion that America will not, perhaps that she cannot undertake a War, against England'.²⁴² Perceval, acknowledging the inconveniences of war, nevertheless in 1807 reckoned that losing American trade due to war was something 'I think this Country ought to risk, rather than suffer America to import free from any risk of war, the produce of the Indies into the Countries of our Enemies'.²⁴³ In March 1812 John Bastard MP even urged the government to consider American resolutions as justifying a declaration of war.²⁴⁴ Britons asserted that America would split were war to occur. The diarist and artist Joseph Farington recorded the opinion of William Goad, a partner in the City, that war would not happen because 'it is believed it wd. cause a separation of the Northern State of American from the

²⁴¹ Ibid., fo. 35-51: 'Coup d'oeil on an American War', Oct/Dec. 1807.

²⁴² Perkins, *Prologue to War*, p. 9.

²⁴³ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 35: Perceval's paper on Orders in Council, 12 Oct. 1807.

²⁴⁴ PD, 1812, xxi, 782.

Southern'. Lord Dunstanville had voiced similar views.²⁴⁵ The Duke of Northumberland in January 1808 recommended that, if hostilities occurred: 'Blockade their ports strictly – capture all their China ships & South whalers, & an insurrection would take place in the United States within five months'.²⁴⁶ Revealingly this belief was shared by senior Pittites, which surely influenced their tough approach towards America. Melville wrote in May 1808 that if America ignored her interest in co-operating with Britain 'I am convinced it would immediately lead to a Separation of the Eastern and Western Provinces'.²⁴⁷ Liverpool opined in 1810 that the British cause was gaining ground, 'and if some material Change should not occur in the System of the Government, the result will probably be, the Separation of the Eastern from the Southern States'.²⁴⁸

These opinions came from a partisan view of American affairs. Derived disproportionately from Federalist viewpoints hostile to Jefferson and Madison's administrations, information from New England meant that, for example, Dudley Ryder believed Timothy Pickering's anti-embargo diatribe would prove significant.²⁴⁹ Perceval, joined by Pittite reviewers, praised the Federalist pamphleteer Robert Walsh's broadly positive comparison of Britain with France.²⁵⁰ Perceval even recommended Walsh's work to the British ambassador in America Augustus Foster.²⁵¹ Castlereagh in March 1808 believed that the Embargo could be used to bring down Jefferson's party: 'The Continuance of the Embargo for some time is the best Chance of their being destroy'd [sic] as a Party'.²⁵² In turn

²⁴⁵ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. K. Cave (14 vols., London, 1979-84), xi, pp. 3968, 3990.

²⁴⁶ CPW, vi, p. 251.

²⁴⁷ TNA, PRO 30/8/368, fo. 52: Melville to Chatham, 26 May 1808.

²⁴⁸ Perkins, *Prologue to War*, p. 14.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁵⁰ BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 219-20: Perceval to ?, nd [c.1811]; J. Eaton, *The Anglo-American Paper War: Debates about the New Republic, 1800-1825* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 40-1.

²⁵¹ Holland (Perceval) Papers, A.15: draft paper on reading Mr Foster's despatch, Jan/Feb 1812.

²⁵² BL, Add MS 49177, fo. 155: Castlereagh's memorandum on Perceval proposed changes to Orders in Council, late Mar. 1808.

the Federalist Samuel Taggart lauded the assassinated Perceval as ‘by far the ablest Minister in England since Mr. Pitt’.²⁵³ American politics was perceived as a matter of a French party versus the English. Melville, in February 1809, described the American government as ‘tools of France’.²⁵⁴

Assessing the relative influence of abolitionist sentiments over the Orders in Council policy is tricky. Eldon frankly articulated the view of wanting foreign slave trades curtailed to ensure that abolition did not harm British interests. Perceval contrastingly did not overtly single out the slave trade as a direct consideration. Yet Stephen’s influence suggests that abolitionism was a background factor. Furthermore, considering Stephen’s correspondence with Perceval helps to reveal significant assumptions, about America and the commercial situation, which guided the Pittites in formulating their policies, ultimately culminating in war.

This chapter has sought to supplement the predominantly post-1815 scholarship on the Pittites, by indicating how war-time policies presaged later actions. It has demonstrated the under-emphasised importance of Perceval’s Anglicanism, by his promotion of Christianity in Berbice and India, alongside the pragmatic approach taking towards missionaries, which savoured more of Perceval’s 1811-12 approach towards Dissenters. His condemnation of Hindu ‘idolatry’ echoed his animus against Catholicism. His Providential ideas underpinned his proselytising and abolitionism, and probably influenced his championing of Orders in Council. Fellow Pittites supported similar policies. The Ryders approved of bishops in India and the Caribbean, and of abolition. Canning and Perceval ensured that the post-1807 Pittite ministries pushed forward slave trade suppression. On America and abolition, Perceval’s

²⁵³ ‘Letters of Samuel Taggart Representative in Congress, 1803-1814, Part II, 1808-1814’, ed. G. Haynes, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 33 (1923), p. 406.

²⁵⁴ NRS, GD224/30/8: memorandum by Melville, 23 Feb. 1809.

links with Stephen were significant, albeit the latter's role may be inflated owing to the vicissitudes of surviving evidence. Finally, we find Perceval's government foreshadowing Liverpool's administration, in the framing of the 1813 East India charter, establishing bishoprics in India and the West Indies, using naval and judicial forces against illegal slave trading, and seeking international agreement to abolish the slave trade. Even amid war these policies pointed the way for the times of peace.

Conclusion

Considering Perceval and his war-time interaction with and influence on his fellow Pittites, two themes become apparent. First, he laid the foundations for many of the policies and appointments which the Liverpool ministry subsequently implemented or developed. In recovering Perceval's place within the Pittites we gain a stronger understanding of them as a whole, including how war-time experiences shaped their subsequent policies, something that accounts which commence in 1814-15 risk overlooking. Perceval's death produced few immediate changes. Catholic Emancipation became an open question in the new Liverpool government and Orders in Council were abandoned. But, strikingly, many policy initiatives begun or promoted by Perceval persisted. The non-partisan, meritocratic approach to church patronage continued under Liverpool. Clergy whom Perceval had recommended, and championed, such as Howley, Magee, and Van Mildert subsequently obtained bishoprics. His curates bill was finally enacted in 1813, and the church-building acts of 1818 and 1824 represented an extension of Perceval's earlier efforts, including the Irish precedent of providing funds for church-construction. Perceval's establishmentarian impulses found echoes in the establishment of bishoprics in India and the West Indies under Liverpool's government, alongside that administration's lukewarm attitude towards the Church of Scotland. Pragmatic attempts to manage food supplies and to enhance commerce also underpinned the policies of the Liverpool government, even if their emphasis was subtly different. The fact that post-war debates over food supplies concentrated on the corn laws has also obscured how Pittite policies evolved from their war-time experiences during debates over closing distilleries to corn. Continuity also existed in attempts to suppress the slave trade, including through international cooperation, and the renewal of the East India Company charter in 1813. Therefore, we should recognise that Perceval foreshadowed many of the policies pursued by the equally pious and establishmentarian Liverpool.

The shift from war to peace also produced changes in policy, notably over the bullion question. In 1819, former members of Perceval's ministry endorsed resuming cash payments. But this also demonstrates how the bullion debates of 1811-12 matter – because they presaged the split between those 'high Tories' such as Vansittart who were reluctant to resume, and 'liberal Tories' who had always supported it. These developments can also be witnessed in Canning's ever-more sympathetic view towards Catholics, contrasted with Perceval's firm resistance to their claims.

The second theme is that Perceval was a significant Pittite in his own right. He spearheaded church reform, an often-neglected aspect of constitutional, and indeed social, policy in this epoch. He championed abolitionism; and above all led the Pittites through the darkest of the war years and greatest period of disunity amongst themselves. Contrary to Bradley's idea that Perceval's religiosity was kept away from government, this thesis has demonstrated that it influenced him in two ways: his religious beliefs and theological studies did guide his policy positions, but always within a pronounced establishmentarianism. Perceval therefore occupied a slightly unusual position amongst the Pittites. His firm Anglicanism made him an unrelenting opponent of Catholic Emancipation, in a way that had already vexed the more liberal-minded Canning. This did presage the disagreements amongst the Pittites post-war over how to address the Catholic question. But none of the other anti-Catholic Pittites were motivated by the strong theological objections to Catholic relief that entrenched Perceval's hostility. This derived from the importance he attached to biblical prophecy, his ideas of Providence, and his aversion to idolatry. Perceval's establishmentarian ideas were also evident in his church patronage, his doubts about non-Anglican Protestants, and his support for a minimum stipend for curates.

This thesis has not been able to cover all aspects of Perceval's career, far less exhaust the Pittites' policies during the war. More could be done to examine public perceptions of

Perceval, and how his reputation for integrity, piety, and honesty abetted his political success. The importance of how the Pittites' war-time policies influenced their post-war actions – an argument that this thesis has emphasised – could also be further scrutinised, especially for the comparatively under-studied Huskisson. Other Pittites who shared Perceval's Anglicanism, commitment to church reform, anti-Catholicism, and high-office, such as the Ryder brothers or Lord Redesdale, could be incorporated within additional work.

Pittism and the Pittites were a heterogeneous set of ideas, policies, and people. Their variations began before Pitt's death. They were further shaped and diversified by their experiences in 1807-12. Though Perceval had to die to permit the 'age of Liverpool' to come into being, he had already influenced it by his actions.

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Appendix A – Letters marked on the list of 1906 as having been destroyed

A Note on the Holland (Perceval) Papers

The Holland (Perceval) Papers were copied onto microfilm as Reels 7-12 of the Perceval Papers, including the copy stored at the Bodleian Library consulted for this dissertation. Reels 1-6 are BL Add MS 49173-90, 49193, 49195 and 48216. Most of the Holland (Perceval) Papers, in the possession of David Holland until 2007, were transferred to the British Library as Add MS 88914. This collection is organised into twenty-six different folders, and contains documents (e.g. Perceval's letters on biblical prophecy) not found on the microfilm. In that case I referenced the material as Add MS 88914/26.

However, where papers could be found in both I decided to continue with the Holland (Perceval) Papers referencing system, for three reasons. First, that is how they would appear to anyone consulting a microfilm copy of the papers, as I have done. Secondly, the incomplete nature of Add MS 88914 would not make comparison easy, and papers are included in the British Library collection Add MS 88914 is predominantly organised chronologically whereas the Holland (Perceval) Papers were organised thematically. Thirdly, unfortunately no new referencing by individual letter has been introduced for Add MS 88914

so references could only inform the reader which folder it was in, whereas every letter in the Holland (Perceval) Papers was designated a precise number as well as a bundle.

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