





‘Satisfied with Marrow and Fatness’: The Epicurean Theology of Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry

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Mussenden Temple, Downhill, Co. Derry. The Irish Image Collection/Superstock.



Hugh Douglas Hamilton, Irish, 1740–1808, Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry and 4th Earl of Bristol (1730–1803), with his granddaughter Lady Caroline Crichton (1779–1856), in the Gardens of the Villa Borghese, Rome, c. 1790. Oil on canvas. 223.5 x 199 cm. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland.

Frederick Hervey (1730–1803), Bishop of Derry and Earl of Bristol, has overwhelmingly been understood as an eccentric egoist, a crank, a rogue, a ‘character’, a figure of fun as inflated and insubstantial as the raspberry puffs he loved to consume. Indeed, a search for Hervey on the electronic catalogue at the National Library of Ireland throws up, among other subject headings, ‘Eccentrics and Eccentricities’.¹ And visitors to his County Derry estate at Downhill today are given a

tour of the National Trust site through ‘funny stories about the crazy Earl Bishop who once lived here’.² Biographies of Hervey have generally reproduced this received narrative of colourful eccentricity, some suggesting a genetic predisposition to mental illness in the Hervey family, and read the details of the Earl-Bishop’s life through such lenses.³ The result has been a collection of limiting labels for an expansive, extraordinary figure of the late eighteenth century. His move from law

- 1 <http://catalogue.nli.ie/Search/Results?lookfor=hervey+frederick&type=AllFields&submit=FIN> [accessed 10 August 2012].
- 2 <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/downhill-demesne-and-hezlett-house/learning/> [accessed 12 July 2012].
- 3 See, for instance, Brian Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl: An Eighteenth-Century Eccentric, The Life of Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry* (London, 1974), who highlights the ‘odd behaviour’ of the Hervey family and the ‘extraordinary eccentricities’ of the bishop. This germ-in-the-blood theory of the Herveys was most recently articulated in the obituaries of Frederick William John Augustus Hervey, 7th marquess of Bristol (1954–99): the *Guardian* describes ‘the family’s destructive genetic fault-line’, and recalls the comment, variously ascribed, that ‘when God created the world he made men, women, and Herveys’. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/1999/jan/18/guardianobituaries1> [accessed 15 June 2011].

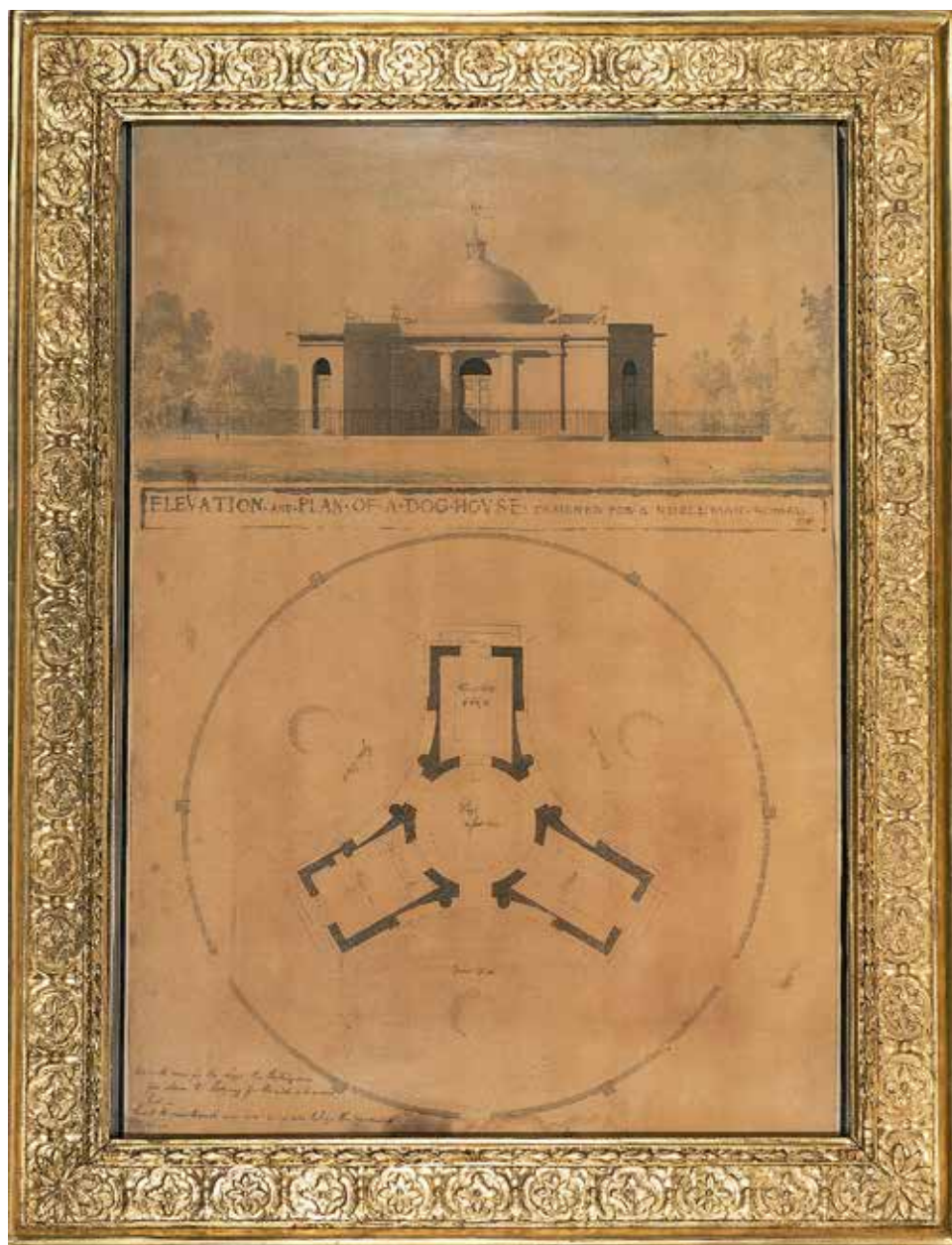
Anonymous, 'The right Rev. Volunteer B of D—.' Portrait of Frederick Augustus Hervey, Bishop of Derry and Earl of Bristol. Stipple engraving, 1784, British Museum.



- 4 C. L. Falkiner insists that 'the worldliness of his subsequent character naturally suggests that the hope of speedy preferment as his incentive [to entering the Church]'. *Studies in Irish History and Biography* (London, 1902), 65. William Childe-Pemberton insists that 'whatever Hervey's object in taking orders may have been, it was certainly not to become a country clergyman'. *The Earl-Bishop: The Life of Frederick Hervey, Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry*, 2 vols. (London, 1925), vol. 1, 49.

to orders in 1754, for instance, is regarded as of a piece with his self-serving, extravagant life: Church preferment offered a comfortable situation for the younger son of a noble house, faced with the problem of how to live well without a large inheritance. Historians generally agree that Hervey's ecclesiastical

career became a vehicle for a host of secular projects that mattered more to him—politics, building, travel, patronage, and women.⁴ By this reading, Hervey was more interested in geology than theology, may well have chosen a good claret over Christ, and spent more time meditating on the layout of his kingdom at



Elevation and Plan of a Dog House, Sir John Soane (1752–1837) for Bishop Hervey of Derry, 1779. © Courtesy of Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London/ Bridgeman Art Library.

Downhill than on the Kingdom of Heaven. Some question whether he was a Christian at all: 'there was something,' writes Brian Fothergill, 'almost pagan in [his] appetite for living'. He goes on to call Hervey's religious beliefs 'an enigma'.⁵ A minor celebrity in his day, Hervey travelled widely on the Continent, where he kept company and correspondence with leading philosophers, princes,

politicians, scientists, artists, architects and writers—including Voltaire, Goethe, Benjamin Franklin, the celebrated architect John Soane, and the geologist John Strange. Judging by such friendships, Hervey might be described as the deist of Derry, whose interest in geology and science aligned him with sceptics of Christian doctrine and a growing rejection of literal interpretations of the Bible.⁶

- 5 Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl*, 28.
- 6 Fothergill describes Hervey as 'a Whig and (very probably) a deist' (*The Mitred Earl*, 37); Lord Charlemont called Hervey a 'Deist and blasphemer', quoted in J. W. Good, 'The Earl Bishop', *Dublin Magazine*, 2 (April 1925), 605–611, at 606.
- 7 Hervey/Bruce Papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, PRONI Ms D2798/1. Beyond a passing reference by Falkiner to their 'unorthodox theology', these sermons have never been treated in any sustained way by historians or biographers. The manuscripts suggest that many of them were delivered before the household and at local country churches near Bury St Edmunds, including Horringer, Westley, Nowton, Hargrave, Rushbrooke, Risby, Saxham, Fornham—the list suggests something of Hervey's peripatetic nature, and provides strong evidence against assertions by some biographers that he refused ecclesial responsibilities while waiting for preferment. Fothergill, for instance, insists that Hervey 'does not appear ever to have contemplated parochial work' (*The Mitred Earl*, 20). Childe-Pemberton insists that 'during the six or seven years that he lived at Horringer, there is no evidence of his having any clerical functions' (*The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 49). Several of the later sermons are not written in Hervey's hand, and are probably the works of his cousin and heir, the Reverend Henry Hervey Bruce.

- 8 Hervey to John Thomas Foster, 3 March 1780, John Leslie Foster Papers, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, RIA Ms 23.G.39/2.
- 9 Hervey to Elizabeth Foster, 30 July 1777, quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 160.
- 10 See Mary McCarthy, *Fighting Fitzgerald and Other Papers* (London, 1930), 31. See also Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl*, 37–38.
- 11 1 June 1775; *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley* (London, 1903) vol. 4, 44. Wesley adds that the bishop ‘celebrated the Lord’s Supper with admirable solemnity.’ See also Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 146–47. Hervey’s sister, Lady Mary Fitzgerald, was an avid follower of Lady Huntington, who was the supporter of a number of itinerant women preachers in Ulster.
- 12 Letter to Constantine Phipps, 18 April 1753; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 29.
- 13 See Falkiner, *Studies in Irish History and Biography*, 63.
- 14 Middleton’s interest in the classical world and paganism contributed to his heterodox beliefs. In a letter to Lord Hervey he explains, ‘It is my misfortune to have had so early a taste of Pagan sense, as to make me very squeamish in my Christian studies’, quoted in H. C. G. Matthews and Brian Harrison, eds., *Dictionary of National Biography [DNB]* (Oxford, 2004), vol. 38, 56. Lord Hervey encouraged Middleton to complete his life of Cicero, and helped to attract subscribers to the book in the royal court. ‘Hervey himself ordered twenty-five sets of the large paper edition, his wife two, and his homosexual lover Stephen Fox five’, 55. See also, J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 1: *The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764* (Cambridge, 1999) for a discussion of Middleton’s Arminianism, which was the occasion of Gibbons’s crisis of faith at Oxford (46–56).

But Hervey’s papers include a collection of some twenty-five sermons, dating from the beginnings of his Church career in Suffolk through his bishopric in Derry.⁷ The early sermons in particular (1755–60) offer a rare glimpse of his theological concerns and some foundational images for his later projects in Ulster. Specifically, Hervey’s repeated metaphors for God—as Builder, as Politician, as Patron—prefigure his own whirlwind of reforms during his bishopric in Ireland. With an annual income of over £60,000, the hyphenated Earl-Bishop wielded a kind of godlike power over his see, and became the creator of his own world at Downhill, the vast estate that housed his growing collection of European Masters, and that he hoped would figure an unfallen world of ‘benevolence to all’.⁸ Hervey’s later attempts to create a political solution for sectarian stand-offs in Ireland, to establish what he called ‘an elegant republicanism’,⁹ might be understood as attempts to put his theology into practice. His wanderings around Europe are perhaps not simply the evidence of a vain, unstable libertine chasing after attention, good food and other people’s wives, but the attempts of a broad-minded reformer to think about Ireland’s sectarian and political troubles imaginatively, and in an ever larger context. Further, his sermons complicate any reading of Hervey as a dedicated deist, or an opponent of revealed religion. What we find in these manuscripts is a thoroughly orthodox position, but encompassing a solution to the theological clash between natural and revealed religion. His preaching was praised by none less than Methodist leader John Wesley, who heard a ‘useful sermon’ on the Holy Ghost during his visit to Derry in 1775, and where he found the bishop ‘a good writer and a good speaker’ and ‘entirely easy and unaffected in his whole behaviour’.¹⁰ Hervey encouraged his own clergy to attend Wesley’s discourses in Derry, and was known to attend the acclaimed evangelical preacher George Whitfield’s sermons in Lady Huntington’s chapel during his visits to Bath.¹¹

It is clear from Hervey’s correspondence that, after his decision to shift from law to

orders, from the Temple to the Church, he was busy voraciously reading and distilling the ideas of a number of theologians and philosophers, among them Francis Hutcheson, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, Conyers Middleton, and Philip Skelton. A 1753 letter to his brother-in-law Constantine Phipps worries about the gains made by a ‘Low Church’, and insists, ‘Tis time indeed my purchases were Principally Theological.’¹² The Hervey family moved in prominent ecclesial and legal circles, and young Frederick was exposed to some of the most influential thinkers of the period, along with the theological controversies simmering within the Church. His mother Mary Hervey was keenly interested in theology, and her pro-Catholic attitude may well explain her son’s later sympathy with Rome.¹³ She was also a follower of Conyers Middleton, geologist, antiquarian, and heterodox clergyman. The family friend found a generous patron in Hervey’s father John Hervey.¹⁴ Middleton was embroiled in theological controversy throughout his life: his study of fossils questioned the biblical account of the Flood; his *Letter from Rome* (1729) revealed the pagan origins of Christian rituals; his *Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers* (1749) threw doubt over the power of the institutional Church. Such positions, along with his irreverence towards the Church hierarchy, ensured that he would be repeatedly passed over for preferment. The young Hervey found a theological mentor in Middleton, who may have provided, along with an enthusiasm for geology and the classical world, a lesson about the ecclesial risks of public heterodoxy.¹⁵

Another member of the Hervey family network was Joseph Butler, whose elevation to bishop can be credited in part to Lord Hervey’s management of court information.¹⁶ Butler’s *Fifteen Sermons* (1726), preached at Rolls Chapel, was an important influence on eighteenth-century ethical thought, and shows some of the marks of Hutcheson’s philosophy of benevolence.¹⁷ Butler’s *Analogy of Religion* (1736) attempted to attract latitudinarians and deists back into the fold of orthodoxy, insisting that what

deists call natural religion is not opposed to revelation, but analogous to it. Nature is to revelation what childhood is to maturity. As creations of the same God, the two must be seen as harmonious parts of a whole. The natural world, in other words, can teach us something about the moral world and divine laws. Conversely, revelation can teach us something about nature: for Butler, orthodoxy allows the natural world to breathe, to expand beyond the confines of limited human reason. Analogy, argues Butler, is the way the human mind works: ‘when we determine a thing to be probably true ... it is from the mind’s remarking in it a likeness to some other event, which he has observed come to pass’.¹⁸ What he determines to show is that ‘the system of religion ... is not a subject of ridicule, unless that of Nature be so too’.¹⁹ We find a similar attempt to resolve the tension between natural and revealed religion, and a similar commitment to an analogical imagination, in Hervey’s own sermons.²⁰ As this essay will show, Hervey finds a solution to the conflict through the analogy of *culture*.

Certainly there is much evidence within the Earl-Bishop’s life and work to suggest that culture was central to his creed. His vast art collection was rivalled only by his building projects, the remnants and ruins of which still punctuate the landscape of Ulster. Perhaps following the dictate of Gibbon that great men build, he commanded the erection of stately glebe houses and added elegant spires to plain-style Protestant churches, determined, as he wrote, ‘to make the County of Derry look like a gentleman’.²¹ Most gentlemanly of all are the magnificent ruins at Downhill, where Hervey built a princely pleasure dome for himself and for his growing art collection, which included paintings by Rubens, Van Dyck, Tintoretto, and Caravaggio, among other European Masters. His library is a replica of the Roman Temple of Vesta, clinging to the jagged basalt cliffs of the Causeway coast, and part of his desire to ‘beautify dear Ireland’.²² He was addicted to round buildings, and had plans at Downhill for a ‘classical dog kennel’, complete with domed roof, Doric columns,

and ornamental canines atop, so that even the hounds might live in Palladian symmetry.²³ His invitation to diplomat William Hamilton to come and stay at Downhill, what he called ‘my Temple of the Winds’, articulates his creation of a sanctuary of gentlemanly pleasures and aesthetic delights:

You shall have musick every day or no day
 You shall see the Giant’s Causeway by sea
 and by land
 You shall see the extinguished volcano and
 almost burning ones
 You shall have growse-shooting or not as
 you please
 You shall fish on salt water or fresh just as
 you like best—
 I will meet you where you please to bring
 you to
 The most Romantic and perhaps the most
 sublime scenery you ever saw—
 Only Come —²⁴

It was along this sublime coastline that Hervey organized elaborate games and competitions between local clergymen, inviting his most overweight vicars to splendid dinners without portion control, and ordering after-dinner running races over sinking bogland, or calling for jumping competitions on full stomachs. For his delight, he organized sectarian horse racing along Downhill strand, pitting lean and fit Presbyterians against his own overfed church ministers, and enjoying the spectacle of hurt pride when his own clergy lost, as they always did. He delighted in games of all kinds, and was known to scatter flour on the floor of the servants’ wing of his mansion, for the prurient delight in discovering the erotic wanderings of his guests. He loved a good scandal, and when none was apparent did his best to create one. His love of scandal bespoke an even-handed parity of esteem—and irreverence—directed at Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter with equal measure. By taking pleasure seriously, Hervey ensured that life at Downhill was never boring.

This comedic vision finds a more serious counterpart in Hervey’s sermons, where one

- 15 See J. D. C. Clark, *English Society 1660–1832* (Cambridge, 2000) for a discussion of the way in which the heterodox were often ‘reticent about their religious views’ because ‘careers continued to be destroyed on ground of heterodoxy’. This fear of heterodoxy was as much about politics as it was about theology, since radical politics often found its origins in religious heterodoxy (330).
- 16 In 1737, it was Hervey’s father who relayed the message from Queen Caroline’s deathbed that she commended Butler to the archbishop of Canterbury. Soon after, he was nominated to the see of Bristol. See *DNB*, vol. 9, 175.
- 17 Hutcheson’s *An Inquiry into the Original of Our ideas of Beauty and Virtue* was published the same year.
- 18 Joseph Butler, *Analogy of Religion* (New York, 1889), 83.
- 19 Butler, *Analogy of Religion*, 89.
- 20 A passion for building and ornamentation is another point of comparison between Butler and Hervey. According to Butler’s biographer, ‘Wherever he resided, he either altered, or enlarged, or restored.’ His taste for stained glass and crosses, as well as his belief in the power of formal ritual over private prayer, led to accusations of popery. See G. R. Crooks, *A Life of Bishop Butler* (New York, 1889), xi.
- 21 Jeremy Black argues that ‘repairing or altering a church ... could indeed be the most significant artistic event in a parish during the century’; *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Subject for Taste* (London, 2005), 87. Hervey’s many additions to the ecclesial landscape of Derry suggest that he took seriously the artistic significance of the built environment. Indeed, one of his reasons for supporting Catholic emancipation and enfranchisement was that he hoped to oversee the building of Catholic cathedrals. In a letter to politician John Beresford, the bishop elaborates on his passion for steeples: ‘Let the Church

The 4th Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, 1790 (oil on canvas). Elisabeth Louise Vigée – Lebrun (1755–1842). Ickworth House, Suffolk/National Trust Photographic Library/Angelo Hornack/Bridgeman Art Library.

decorate the country ... and let its steeple and spire make it the visible as well as the Established Church’; quoted in Falkiner, *Studies in Irish History and Biography*, 73.

- 22 Quoted in Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl*, 53.
- 23 See John Soane, *Downhill Notebook*, which includes sketches for the classical dog kennel. http://soane.org.uk/drawings/index.cfm?display_scheme+66 [accessed 18 July 2012].
- 24 Letter to Hamilton, 25 May 1791, Bristol/Hamilton Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, NLI MS 2262. This articulation of the ideals of tolerance, sympathy, and pleasure, along with the use of Egyptian ornaments and obelisks, the classical temple and elaborate landscape design, all point to the possibility that Hervey was, like so many of his friends and colleagues, a Freemason. Further, his sermons refer again and again to God as ‘Master Builder’ and ‘Divine Workman’.
- 25 Sermon 1, 1755, Hervey/Bruce Papers, PRONI Ms D2798/1 [hereafter, Sermon 1].
- 26 Sermon 1.
- 27 Aquinas argues in Question 12 of *Summa Theologiae I* that ‘since it is God’s essence to exist, created existence must be his proper effect’ and that ‘Our ultimate happiness consists in our highest activity, which is the exercise of our mind’. See *Summa Theologiae, Questions on God*, eds. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge, 2006), 79, 114.



is struck by the persistent optimism of his version of Christianity. There are echoes here of Joseph Priestley’s Unitarian theology of benevolence, immanence, and the absolute goodness of creation. In fact, his earliest sermons are meditations on Creation and Thanksgiving, and his very first, in 1755, chooses as its text Luke 22:19, ‘He took bread and gave thanks.’ Hervey insists, again and again, on the reckless, radical gift of creation, which gives us not simply the ‘necessary

support’ to survive but an excessive, endless ‘multiplicity’ of luxuries and delights.²⁵ He further asserts that creation becomes more valuable by our response to it—that by appreciating creation in all of its ‘astonishing manifestations’ we make it worth more.²⁶ Aquinas argued for a similar relational understanding of creation—that the world, to be capable of its fullest meaning, necessarily implies the presence of the human mind.²⁷ In other words, rational, loving creatures



Anonymous, 'The Church Militant'. Portrait of Frederick Augustus Hervey, Bishop of Derry and 4th Earl of Bristol. Etching, 1784, British Museum.

appreciate the astonishing wonder of creation in a way that sheep and goats do not, and so by this gratitude and understanding make it more itself, or complete the equation. Hervey compares this value-added condition to the relationship between food and the human palate: 'a lively sense of warm return of the bounties of Providence brings to those

bounties what our palate is to our food, to give us exquisite taste of what the common clap of men use only for their nourishment'. God provides us 'with all that can delight as well as nourish', and

when [man] sees such an innumerable variety of food calculated for the

- 28 Sermon 1.
- 29 Sermon 1.
- 30 Thomas Gray, who was a student at Cambridge with Hervey, describes a reunion of the friends, after Hervey's elevation: 'I have seen his Lordship of Cloyne often. He is very jolly, and we devoured four raspberry puffs together in Cranbourne Alley; but he is gone, and Heaven knows when we shall eat any more'; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 87.
- 31 Letter to Constantine Phipps, 10 July 1754; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 48. In a letter to John Strange (23 February 1779) critiquing his 'Volcanic Dissertation', Hervey uses a culinary metaphor, advising the geologist to 'throw your learning into notes, like Cold Buttocks of Beef on a side-table, that none may be forced to eat of it, but who pleases'; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 229.
- 32 Hervey commissioned John Soane to design the most important room at Downhill, the dining room. See Pierre du Prey, "Je n'oublieray jamais": John Soane and Downhill', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, 21, 3-4 (1978), 17-40, at 22.
- 33 Sermon 1.
- 34 Sermon 7, 1755, Hervey/Bruce Papers, PRONI Ms D2798/1 [hereafter, Sermon 7].
- 35 Sermon 1.
- 36 Sermon for Christmas, 1772, Hervey/Bruce Papers, PRONI Ms D2798/1.

37 Sermon 13, 1775, Hervey/
Bruce Papers, PRONI Ms
D2798/1.

38 Joseph Butler, ‘Sermon III’,
*Fifteen Sermons, Preached
at the Rolls Chapel* (London,
1856), 68 (my emphasis).

nourishment of his palate, administered to the Indulgence of it, Birds, Beasts, and Fish, all fram’d for his use, and subservient to his pleasure, if he does not see a duty and cannot find a joy in thanking such a benefactor it will prove how little he merits, or is capable of relishing the benefit itself.²⁸

For this reason, Hervey holds that thanksgiving is ‘of the noblest and pleasantest’ religious acts, is the prayer of those who are ‘satisfied with marrow and fatness’ and ‘elevated with the riches of their condition—their mouth praiseth God with joyful lips’.²⁹ In other words, the same mouth that can appreciate the delicacy and wonder of a raspberry puff (one of the bishop’s favourite confections³⁰), will necessarily open its lips also to praise God. Just as the refined palate can taste and appreciate a fine wine, so the grateful creature can taste and see the goodness of the Lord. This sermon, shot through with images of lips, mouths, and a conflation of eating and praying, suggests what we might call a kind of Epicurean theology. In fact, Hervey used the metaphor of taste to describe his decision to shift from law to orders: ‘as I have tasted both the Cups no one can wonder that I have prefer’d that w^{ch} pleas’d my taste most’.³¹

The Earl-Bishop might also be called the ‘Oral-Bishop’, who founds a Christian ethics on such capacity for oral pleasure.³² ‘Here would arise,’ he argues, ‘a general, pious, and friendly hospitality, not founded on gluttony or ostentation, but on social pleasure and true charity, where mankind would meet curiously to search and admire the works of creation.’³³ There is a connection made here between pleasure in food and pleasure in language, between eating and talking. Indeed, prayer is described as an elegant ‘conversation’ or ‘intercourse’ with God.³⁴ The palate capable of relishing the marrow and fat of our food suggests by extension a mind capable of delighting in company, in ‘meeting curiously’ our fellow creatures, and sharing in the ‘abundance’ or ‘affluence’ of creation.³⁵ Such an understanding of a good and plentiful

creation may be the secret of Hervey’s later excess. A later sermon begins with an invocation that again makes this connection between eating and ethics: ‘grant that we may ... inwardly digest [the texts of sacred scripture]’.³⁶ Another sermon meditates once more on the relational nature of creation, and the ways in which the human mind is involved in a kind of creative act: ‘every object it beholds supplies it with fresh matter of inquiry, every new acquisition serves only as a step to a further progress: till its desires become as boundless as their objects, and infinite as the creation itself’.³⁷ Human beings, by this analysis, are involved in a kind of reader-response criticism, making the text of creation more meaningful and abundant by the act of reading, tasting and enjoying it. Taste is at once a noun and a verb, something you have, and something you do. It is only by tasting the world that we might see that it is good.

Hervey believes that this capacity for gratitude and delight in creation is the basis for all true charity, that one gives to his fellow creatures out of an attempt to share the wealth of creation, to multiply the acts of thanksgiving in the world, to add to the sum total of pleasure. In this he shares with Butler the idea that self-love and love of neighbour need not be considered opposites. For Butler,

Conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way. Duty and interest are perfectly coincident; for the most part in this world, but entirely and in every instance *if we take the future and the whole*; this being implied in the notion of a good and perfect administration of things.³⁸

The passage above invites listeners to think in a larger and longer context, leading to an understanding that ‘virtue and interest are not to be opposed’. Hervey’s description of his life at Downhill is a fitting articulation of this conflation of self-love and charity:

You cannot imagine how satisfactorily I pass my time here: early hours, simple food, constant Exercise, Balsamy Air, moderate company and little F[rederick]

increasing in favour with God and Man—I am now writing to you at 7 in the morning with an Eastern Sun dawning upon Me and the Magnificent Ocean roaring in the most authoritative tone. ... but how does my day pass? In acts of beneficence to the Poor, of Society with the rich and Benevolence to All—I improve my lands, enrich my tenants, decorate the country, cheer my neighbours, acquire health and good humour for myself and communicate wealth and comfort to others.³⁹

One of Hervey's persistent images for God is that of Patron or Benefactor, whose infinite generosity has the effect of 'enlarging' the human capacity for love. The bishop's later munificence towards the people of County Derry, his consistently favourable response to importunate letters from tenants, articulates some connection between his early theology and his later practices.⁴⁰ A 1755 sermon describes God as one who always 'stoops to our weakness', and who shows 'infinite mercy' and 'patience', even towards a 'Rebellious People'.⁴¹ The bishop may have later thought of himself as a kind of god—critics understand him as puffed up, vain, extravagant, slightly mad and obsessed with his creation of Downhill⁴²—but we might also think of him as modelling himself on this excessively generous God, and a God patient with a weak, rebellious, recalcitrant people. In a letter to English travel writer Arthur Young, the bishop asserts that 'the rights of humanity form a great article in my Creed'.⁴³

Hervey was known for his lifelong commitment to Catholic emancipation, campaigning for political and civil liberties for Catholics fifty years before they were grudgingly granted. He allowed Mass to be said in the crypt of his library at Downhill, and invited the local priest to his dining table. He bankrolled the first Catholic chapel in Derry—Long Tower Church—and personally chose the magnificent Italian marble that adorns the altar. He undertook public works projects to relieve poverty, and was a generous patron to the Catholic population of Derry. His generous attitude towards Irish Catholics

might be connected to his earlier theology outlined in the sermons. 'The rights of humanity demand a general and unlimited toleration at all times,' he writes in a letter of 1779. 'Place us all on the same footing, and we shall all be equally good subjects,' he argues in one of his rants against the English treatment of Irish Catholics,⁴⁴ the first person plural strangely allying him with his Catholic neighbours. He describes this oppressed majority as 'a class of citizen equally respectable' as their rulers.⁴⁵ And in a letter to his son-in-law John Thomas Foster he argues that 'an illegal connivance like ours is mean and unworthy of any government'.⁴⁶ The answer to the Irish question or the Irish problem of a disaffected Catholic majority is, for Hervey, generosity, not meanness. Just as God wins our prayers of thanksgiving by his extravagant generosity, so England could learn how to win over Irish Catholics by giving them *more*, not less. For Hervey, the Christian vision is one of enlarging the mind, and enlarging the human capacity for tolerance and love. His own life of boundless travel and generosity, along with his vast building projects, suggest an attempt to live out this vision.⁴⁷ On this outer edge of Ulster, his extravagant life and building projects might be taken as a reaction against what he saw as the limits of a Low Church: his appetite for ever new delights, his taste for double portions of pleasure, might be seen as defying the sometimes tight-lipped Calvinism he found in his diocese. Like Jonathan Swift before him, Hervey worried about the explosion of Presbyterians in Ireland, with the result that Church of Ireland members were becoming 'unchurched'. Particularly in his own diocese, Presbyterianism was threatening to become the Established Church. In a 1796 letter to the archbishop of Cashel, the bishop pleads for the building of new churches, commenting, 'No Diocese in the Kingdom needs them more for I am over-run & run over with Presbyterians & many a good church-family goes to *meeting* because too distant from church. Multiply the Parsons & we shall diminish the Presbyterians ...'⁴⁸

39 Hervey to John Thomas Foster, 3 March 1780.

40 See Terry Eagleton, 'The Good-Natured Gael', in *Crazy John and the Bishop* (Cork, 1998), 68–140, for a discussion of the Hutchesonian philosophy of benevolence as 'a centrifugal force, which bears you out of yourself in compassion for another' (85); further, 'benevolence is a kind of robust bodily pleasure, a *jouissance* which savours the moral delectability of others as one might smack one's lips over a dish of prawns. Virtue, for Hutcheson ... is comedy, the foe of all Puritan self-repression, an antidote to grim-lipped Protestant earnestness' (99).

41 Sermon 2, 1755, Hervey/Bruce Papers, PRONI Ms D2798/1.

42 Thomas Gray quipped that 'sometimes from vanity he may do a right thing'; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 2.

43 Quoted in Good, 'The Earl Bishop', 606.

44 Quoted in Good, 'The Earl Bishop', 609.

45 'Reply to "Bill of rights Battalion's Address"', *Volunteer Evening Post*, 17 January 1784; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 326.

46 Letter to John Thomas Foster, 24 January 1778, John Leslie Foster Papers, RIA Ms 23.G, 39/2.

47 Childe-Pemberton describes his 'insatiable ... passion for rapid travel and movement'; *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 86.

48 Hervey to the archbishop of Cashel, 22 November 1796, Normanton Papers, PRONI MS T3719/C29/39. One of Hervey's first acts as bishop was to propose the building of a new parish church at Tamlaghtard, Magilligan, near Downhill. Vestry notes record that the bishop would 'give Fifty Pounds to that Purpose provided the Parish will allow his Lordship to choose a Situation, which Proposal was readily and thankfully accepted by the Parishioners there present'; Tamlaghtard Parish Record, 28 March 1769, PRONI MS T867/1. The 'Situation' chosen is a point halfway up Mount Benevenagh, so that the church stands proudly over and above the Presbyterian population below. The old parish church was bequeathed to the local Catholic population. For a discussion of the powerful inroads made by the evangelical Low Church into the Established Church during this period, see Clark, *English Society 1600–1832*, 284.

49 Sermon fragment, 1774(?), Hervey/Bruce Papers, PRONI Ms D2798/1.

50 Letter to John Thomas Foster, 24 January 1778.

51 See Eagleton, 'The Good-Natured Gael', *Crazy John and the Bishop*, 68–140, for a discussion of the birth of 'commercial humanism' (76).

52 See Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (Oxford, 2000), 66. The *Personal Narrative* makes countless references to the 'sweetness' of God's grace, and indeed the desire to be 'swallowed up in God'. http://mith.umd.edu/eada/html/display.php?docs=edwards_personalnarrative.xml&action=show [accessed 10 August 2012].

53 Sermon 5, 1755, Hervey/Bruce Papers, PRONI Ms D2798/1.

Hervey insists repeatedly in his sermons that the unforgivable sin is meanness—the refusal to recognize the absolute goodness of the world, the inability to delight in creation, the 'reproach' of God for 'the excesses of luxury'. For Hervey, the Fall was the moment when human beings refused to see that 'all was good', when 'ignorance' replaced 'affirmation'; the worst sins for Hervey are the product of 'the growth of little minds', stimulated by 'no generous passion' and 'the excess of no virtue'.⁴⁹ Here, the language of fecundity, excess and generosity is inverted, and we find in the image of the small, miserly mind, growing ever smaller and narrower—a kind of photographic negative of God's bounty, an excess not of fullness and 'multiplicity' but of emptiness and absence. He argues instead for 'a happy toleration of all Religions, which produces the truly Catholic one, Benevolence and Forbearance! ... Commerce and Agriculture flourish in proportion to their reciprocal forbearance.'⁵⁰ Like Hutcheson, and like some more recent Ulster politicians, Hervey sees the commercial gain to be found in a peaceful society.⁵¹ Hervey's commitment to pleasure, to games, to fun, might be seen in the context of this vision of the world: play is not simply a leisure activity but a way of being in the world, a way of witnessing to God's own delight in creation. By taking fun seriously, Hervey defies those suspicious of pleasure in his increasingly Presbyterian diocese.

What is more, Hervey suggests that revelation is another way in which God adds to our pleasure and enjoyment of this world. Nature can know something of pleasure, but revelation offers pleasure in double portions. In this sense, revelation is analogous to culture for Hervey: it gives us something more and better than what nature or biology can offer. Why settle for the *grape* of natural religion, in other words, when you can have the *wine* of revelation? Culture, like revelation, adds to and refines nature, takes it beyond the limits of biology. Or, as theologian Jonathan Edwards argued across the Atlantic, revelation is what allows us to recognize the 'sweetness' of divine

things.⁵² Left to ourselves, argues Hervey, we can achieve only a 'brittle' and 'narrow' philosophy.⁵³ Revelation offers us, rather, an expansive, boundless, variable life. In this, Hervey is able, in his large and encompassing way, and like Butler, to be at once orthodox and heterodox, to embrace both revealed and natural religion. By asserting the power of revelation, he aligns himself with the critics of deism and latitudinarianism; but with this analogy to culture, art and human creation, he aligns himself with cosmopolitan men of letters across Europe. He is able, like his infamously bisexual father, to have it both ways.

Another persistent image in his sermons is that of the 'inner ornament', a gloss of 1 Peter 3:4: 'But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.'⁵⁴ In Hervey's vision, the true Christian life is compared to an ornament, something fashioned or exquisitely made, something extra, added on, and not something natural or inborn. It is possible that Hervey's interpolation is a response to Wesley and Methodism's 'inner light', a doctrine strongly rejected by Hervey's mentor, Middleton. Hervey's later sermons from his tenure in Derry often rant against the religious enthusiasm of Dissenters, particularly for their dangerous introspection and elevation of individual feeling over established custom. Once again, the bishop who dedicated his life to adorning his see, adding lustre to Ulster, makes an analogous move in his theology. If 'inner light' suggests nature, 'inner ornament' suggests culture.⁵⁵

It would be easy to suggest that Hervey was offering up, in his sermons, a kind of easy-listening, feel-good, Hutchesonian Christianity for the upper classes—something that did not interfere with their fine living and gentlemanly pleasures, and nothing as distasteful as revelation, piety, or uncritical belief. But Hervey's early enthusiasm for the Reverend Philip Skelton, the rabid anti-deist and reformist of Ulster, complicates any such reading. The Antrim-born Skelton was

a razor-sharp philosopher and theologian, medical doctor and social reformer. He twice sold his personal library to provide famine relief. If Hervey coupled benevolence with self-love, Skelton's life was one of charity and self-denial. A selected list of his titles gives some sense of his commitment at once to orthodoxy and rural improvement: *Some New Reasons for Inoculations, The Necessity of Tillage and Granaries, Woe to the Drunkard, How to be Happy, Though Married*,⁵⁶ and most importantly, *Deism Revealed* (1749), an attack on the proponents of natural religion. Skelton rejected deism as a disguised form of atheism. Its belief in the power of human reason, in human self-sufficiency, could never be squared with a belief in God, who is, argues Skelton, 'the most inconceivable and mysterious of all beings ... What is reason to God? It is an inch of line to an unfathomable ocean: it is a foot-rule into infinite space.'⁵⁷ The title—*Deism Revealed*—itself suggests his Counter-Enlightenment strategy, as the beam of revelation exposes this faulty human doctrine.⁵⁸ In it he describes the ideas of Shaftesbury as conveying 'an infinity of bad principles, of self-sufficiency, conceit, confusion, and affectation, into minds as yet unformed, under the cover of superficial reasonings, and a glare of false wit, [which] should be considered as lumps of poison, wrapped in gold-leaf: the covering thin, and the poison massy.'⁵⁹

His sermons share with Hervey's a sense of the dilation of the mind that is our heavenly reward—

we shall then make surprising discoveries, and delight to lose ourselves in the contemplation of infinite wonders. ... If it is extremely agreeable to travel from one country to another on the surface of this world, what would it be to visit and survey the curiosities of other worlds, to outstrip the light on the swift wings of contemplation, in the search of *nature*.⁶⁰

Note here again the expansive mind of the true Christian, and the almost *Star Trek* theology of travels in space and time.

Significantly, the glorious end of the soul is in contemplating *nature* here, as Skelton subsumes natural science into his vision of all-encompassing divine revelation. In his 'Hymn to God' Skelton describes revelation as 'double portions of thy light' which 'awake [the soul's] powers, and bid its virtues grow'.⁶¹ In another discourse, he uses the Swiftian strategy of estrangement to consider the extraordinary power of the Christian economy of salvation:

If this had not been our own case, and we had been only told it of those beings who inhabit some other planet or world, how should we have been astonished and affected! A race of creatures at war with their Maker, and reconciled to him by the death of his Son! Which of the two must have struck us with greater amazement? Their rebellion or his compassion? ... But this ... is not the account of a distant world ... No, it is the true story of ourselves, and of our rebellion and misery, of our redemption and glory; and God is the historian.⁶²

For Skelton, God knows human history, and the story of every self, better than we do ourselves. God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, his eyes 'pierce the soul, and see all its secrets'.⁶³ Further, and against the deist creed that Christianity is not mysterious, or God unknowable, Skelton insists that 'He only knows God ... who compels his low and narrow prejudices to give way, and enlarges his understanding, to make room for a great and exalted idea of the divine Being'.⁶⁴ In a pointed reference to John Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious*, Skelton entitles his Discourse XXIV 'Christianity not Incredible, *because Mysterious*'. Like Hervey, Skelton aligns revelation with the enlargement of the human mind, and with an increased capacity for pleasure and for generosity. Discourse III argues that 'in heaven [enjoyment] will be as various, as boundless, as endless, as glorious, as the objects to be enjoyed'.⁶⁵ This same discourse argues that

54 Sermon 7 describes the Christian as 'putting on the armour of light, and breastplate of righteousness, with inward ornaments, and shining with riches of the soul'. The Ms replaces 'inward' with 'inner'.

55 Ornaments were another of Hervey's passions. One of his bibles was Charles Rollin's *Belles Lettres*, which describes the proper use of ornamentation, both architectural and rhetorical. Rollin describes 'good taste' as 'the same discerning faculty which introduces universally the same elegance, the same symmetry, and the same order ... which inclines us to a noble simplicity, to natural beauties, and a judicious choice of ornaments'; Charles Rollin, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres*, 4 vols. (Dublin, 1742), vol. 1, 48.

56 This title was recycled by Beckett for his radio play, *All That Fall*.

57 Philip Skelton, *Ophiomaches; or, Deism Revealed*, 2 vols., ed. David Berman ([1749] Reprinted, Bristol, 1990), vol. 2, 146. Hervey makes a similar point in his sermon of 1775 on Job: 'God is a Being so infinitely transcending the conceptions of finite beings that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him and even the angels themselves shrink in his presence—long then shall man—who is perhaps the most imperfect of all intellectual beings presume to fathom his inexhaustible [bottomless] nature—this is the *fountain* of light, which at first glimpse [glance] dazzles and overpowers all our faculties ... as from the very nature of the subject we shall be always sure to labour in the dark.' (Hervey's emphasis). PRONI Ms D2798/1.

58 David Berman places Skelton in the camp of Irish Counter-Enlightenment philosophers like Peter Browne, Archbishop King, John Ellis and Edmund Burke. See his Introduction to *Deism Revealed*, viii.

Frederick Augustus Hervey,
Bishop of Derry and 4th Earl of
Bristol, detail of marble bust by
Christopher Hewetson, c. 1778.
National Portrait Gallery, London.



- 59 Skelton, *Deism Revealed*, vol. 2, 259.
- 60 Discourse III, *The Works of the Rev. Philip Skelton* [hereafter, *Works*], 5 vols. (Dublin, 1770), vol. 3, 56 (my emphasis).
- 61 ‘An Hymn to God’, *Works*, vol. 4, 611.
- 62 Discourse I, *Works*, vol. 3, 2.
- 63 Discourse III, *Works*, vol. 3, 63.
- 64 Discourse XXIV, *Works*, vol. 3, 464.
- 65 Discourse III, *Works*, vol. 3, 52.
- 66 Discourse III, *Works*, vol. 3, 62–63.
- 67 Discourse XXV, *Works*, vol. 3, 490.
- 68 This same sermon, preached 31 May 1767, also calls for a ‘venerable solemnity in the Episcopal chair’ as well as ‘a natural plainness in dress, in attendance, in diet, when the world is running mad after artificial refinements’ (Discourse XXVIII, vol. 4, 549, 550). Skelton’s failure to preach at Hervey’s consecration, coupled with these warnings, might suggest that Hervey’s respect for Skelton was not reciprocated. The bishop’s subsequent attempts to visit Skelton, and to elevate him in the Church, were met with refusal by the Ulster clergyman. See Samuel Burdy, *The Life of Philip Skelton, with Some Curious Anecdotes* ([1792] Oxford, 1914).
- 69 Discourse XXVIII, *Works*, vol. 4, 549.
- 70 Hervey articulated a desire for preferment in Ireland early in his career; see Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 65.

appetite and taste must be acquired before we can enjoy any thing. There is no enjoyment without love ... When Christ shall entertain us in his Father’s Kingdom with fruit from the tree of life, and the new wine, we shall probably receive a measure of delight proportionable to the appetite we bring with us to the celestial banquet.⁶⁶

Further, for Skelton, ‘the heart that is opened and enlarged ... hath an infinitely wider scope of enjoyment, ... he tastes with the palate of the hungry, and feeds through a thousand appetites. His whole life is a feast of love.’⁶⁷

This sense of largeness, of a bigger and wider context, is a repeated trope in Hervey’s sermons, and in his life and work—not surprising, perhaps, for a man who was reported to have been unable to breathe in small rooms. It may find its origins in the writings of Skelton. So impressed was Hervey with Skelton that he asked him to preach at his consecration in 1767, and to become his chaplain.⁶⁸ And that sermon, ‘The Pastoral Duty’, though not delivered by Skelton because of illness, warns against becoming one of those bishops who ‘shrank themselves, and their sacred function, into a littleness.’

He calls instead for an Irish bishop to ‘shew thyself in a pattern of good works’ and for the ‘eager and active pursuit’ of divine glories, with ‘all the vigour that the grace of God can give us’.⁶⁹ It was Skelton who may have first sparked Hervey’s interest in Ireland, and who offered an example of patronage and social reform the bishop emulated in his later career.⁷⁰ Given Hervey’s friendships with so many deists and heterodox thinkers, and his own reputation for freethinking, it is not easy to account for his attraction to Skelton. One possibility is that Hervey, like Burke, knew the importance of public orthodoxy.⁷¹ In his closet he may have been heterodox, but from the pulpit Hervey was the voice of the Established Church. To be a freethinker was also to be opposed to the political power of the Church. Aligning himself with Skelton may well have been a pragmatic move for the young cleric angling for ecclesiastical preferment. And performing orthodox doctrine may not have bothered Hervey, whose ‘dramatic instinct’ made him capable of ‘throwing himself into whatever part it pleased him to assume’.⁷² But Hervey’s interesting take on revelation, his use of analogy, suggests not simply a parroting of

orthodox positions, but an attempt to think in larger contexts about theological controversy. Just as his involvement in politics hoped to solve the Irish problem through a wider European context, Hervey tries in these sermons to settle theological tensions by offering a longer and larger view.

Another one of Hervey's images for God is that of Politician, and just as we trust the wise politician to understand what seem to us 'the mysteries of government', so should we trust in God's design of 'the mysteries of our creation'. Much has been written about Hervey's political career. Best known to historians as the leader of the Ulster Volunteers, he famously led a triumphant procession from Downhill to Dublin in 1782.⁷³ Decked out in an elaborate mix of military and ecclesial dress, in a carriage drawn by horses ornamented in matching purple and gold, and with dashing young parsons as outriders, along with his nephew, the infamous duelist 'Fightin' Fitzgerald' as his personal minder, the bishop entered Dublin with his customary modesty, hoping to change history and become king of a new tolerant Ireland. His political dreams were dashed at the Volunteer Convention, where his ideas for Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform were rejected, and he himself nearly arrested for treason. His behaviour at the Convention is often read as further evidence of his vanity and instability. Secretary of State Lord Hillsborough reported that 'Lord Bristol is going on like a madman' and that 'the people are as mad as the Bishop'.⁷⁴ But these ideas were the product of years of research on the possibility of establishing a Gallican Catholicism in Ireland.⁷⁵ His papers show evidence of his attempts to formulate an oath of allegiance that Irish Catholics would not find distasteful, and his hopes for a tolerant, equal society in Ireland. In 1770 he travelled to the Continent to explore rocks and strata of basaltic formations resembling the Giant's Causeway in Languedoc, and on this same trip he visited a host of monasteries, Catholic libraries, seminaries, and had audiences with a number of Roman ecclesiastics and even Pope Clement XIV. This tour was not just

about geology—it was about his search for religious tolerance. His letters suggest that he was busy looking for comparisons—in rock formations and in religious culture—between Ireland and Europe. His visits to Toulouse, Clermont, Lyons and Rouen, were part of his project to determine whether Catholics in Ireland might subscribe to a Gallican oath, or renouncing the primacy of the pope in temporal affairs.

But his travels in the Auvergne region were also part of his geological fascination with extinct volcanoes. A 1773 letter to his nephew Constantine Phipps is interesting for its desire to connect Ulster, and Ireland, with these other regions—

You have doubtless heard much of our Giant's Causeway: till lately it has been reckon'd single of its kind, but I have discover'd such varieties of the same sort both in France and Italy, and accompanied with such peculiarities of soil as can no longer leave the origin of this strange phenomenon a Problem: the entire little district of Velay in France is compos'd of it ... to confirm this one need but observe the shooting of salts in any Chymical experiments or the formation of Sugar-candy in a Sugar-house, to be convinc'd that these columns have likewise been in a state of Fusion, & owe their figure to the action of Fire—all this country of Ireland has in some remote age been equally agitated by subterranean fires ... I cannot hesitate in supposing the whole mass thrown up like the Islands near Santorini, ... like Thera and Theresia, like Delos and Rhodes, by fire under the sea.⁷⁶

Notice the language here—Ireland is not singular, peculiar, strange, or problematic. Seen in a wider context, it shares characteristics and elements with the Continent and the Mediterranean. Hervey is speaking of geology, but this could also be taken as his account of the Irish political and religious landscape. The fact that these trips were at once geological and theological is significant, for Hervey, as

71 In his speech on clerical subscription (6 Feb 1772), Burke insists that 'In their closets they [the clergy] may embrace what tenets they please, but for the sake of peace and order, they must inculcate from the pulpit only the religion of the state.' See Paul Langford, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. ii (Oxford, 1981), 361.

72 Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 3. The biographer goes on to suggest that a contemporary analysis of Hervey might decide he suffered from multiple personalities.

73 The Volunteer movement began in response to the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland during the American Revolutionary War, and raised local militia to defend the island against the threat of a Spanish or French invasion. The military movement quickly became a powerful political force, campaigning for Irish Parliamentary reforms, and climaxing in the Dublin Volunteer Convention. Hervey recognized in the movement an opportunity to forward his ideas for Catholic and Presbyterian enfranchisement, as well as to sport military costume.

74 Quoted in Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl*, 106.

75 Gallicanism, a doctrine originating in France, rejected ultramontanism, and downplayed the authority of the Pope in matters of the State. Hervey hoped that by importing such a doctrine to Ireland he could solve the Irish Question.

76 Letter to Constantine Phipps, 7 March 1773; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 126. Interestingly, in his famous address to the Volunteers in 1784, Hervey describes the Irish people as animated by 'a Promethean Fire'; quoted in Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 326.

77 Daniel Roche, *Le Siècle des Lumières en province. Académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1689–1789* (Paris/The Hague, 1978) 2 vols. See also Roche, *Les republicains des lettres* (Paris, 1988).

78 See Luco Ciancio, ‘The Correspondence of a “Virtuoso” of the late Enlightenment: John Strange and the Relationship between British and Italian Naturalists’, *Archives of Natural History*, 22, 1 (1995), 119–29, who argues that ‘the men of letters and dilettanti living in the provinces played a crucial role not only in spreading ideas and attitudes to all levels but also in transmitting them from one national context to another. To a large extent, the cosmopolitan character of the Enlightenment and its influence on all aspects of European life can be seen as a major consequence of their active involvement in locally-based initiatives’ (119). Hervey’s interest in comparative politics and theology, as well as comparative natural history, along with his abundant correspondence with men of letters across Europe, suggests his involvement in this kind of cultural transformation.

79 Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, 83. See also Ian MacBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland: Isle of Slaves* (Dublin, 2010), and Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Harvard, 2011).

80 See Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 161.

81 Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, vol. 1, 165.

cosmopolitan man of letters, was given to lateral thinking, or thinking in ever larger contexts. Hervey’s travels abroad might be seen as participating in what Daniel Roche has described as the Enlightenment of the provinces, or the relationship between regional and cosmopolitan cultures—men of letters rooted in the provinces, spreading ideas and attitudes from one national context to another, and so bringing about local transformation.⁷⁷ Hervey’s travels abroad might be read as participating in this local cosmopolitanism. He was involved in a project of bringing back to this edge of Europe not only art and artefacts for his princely home, but also continental ideas—about politics, education, public works, science, and social change. His letters—where some of his finest ideas are voiced—demonstrate his involvement in a vast network of intellectuals all across Europe.⁷⁸ Hervey’s life and work are also evidence of the point made by Jeremy Black that Enlightenment ideas took place ‘within, rather than against, Protestantism’.⁷⁹

During his travels in Germany, Hervey spent some time at the spa-town of Pyrmont, and in a 1777 letter to his daughter Elizabeth he describes ‘the great parity that is maintained here among all persons’, ‘among the crowd are expatriated prime-ministers, exhausted ministers of the gospel, Lutherans, Calvinists, Jews, Greeks, etc., who all together form a good savoury oglio of society’.⁸⁰ He celebrates ‘the spirit of elegant and easy republicanism’ that reigns in the principality (the phrase ‘elegant republicanism’ well expresses his double commitment to art and equality—in other words, have a revolution, but do it in style, as evidenced by his own entry into Dublin). Another letter to his daughter, a month later, describes his meeting with the ‘mad sovereign’ of Augsburg, an extravagant ruler after his own heart, who gave Hervey a tour of one of his progressive academies:

I did not think so perfect a system of education existed anywhere: Lads of every nation, every religion, every age

and even every rank, are here admitted ... Each follows his genius. We saw rooms for painting, sculpture, drawing, music, Latin, Greek, Hebrew. This is the true secret of education.⁸¹

It is here too that Hervey took notes on Augsburg’s success in creating an equal, tolerant, peaceable society of Catholics and Protestants. In each of these cases, we see Hervey the politician and reformer researching these mini-republics and tolerant societies, to bring such ideas back to Ireland along with his paintings and sculpture. Human rights, as he commented, was central to his creed.

In his sermon on the Creation, Hervey compares God to a Master Builder, ‘the Divine Workman’ who creates by a ‘sort of consultation’ with the other members of the Godhead. Hervey imagines a ‘discussion’ between the members of the Trinity leading to the decision to ‘make man in our image’. As with his other images—God as Patron and as Politician—Hervey’s theology imagines God as an Enlightenment Gentleman, one who consults with a team of like-minded builders, who builds not just something good enough, but very good. Hervey’s whirlwind of creative energies, his schemes and stratagems for reforming Ireland, his flitting around the Continent, are often taken as evidence of his eccentric behaviour, his hobby-horse obsessions and his mental instability. But a close reading of his sermons may complicate that view, and suggest that while Hervey was busy making God into his own image, and making himself into a kind of god, he was also trying to imagine a more generous, tolerant, and creative ruling power in Ireland. Amidst his excesses and intrigues, Hervey can also be understood as a figure of serious purpose and thought.

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